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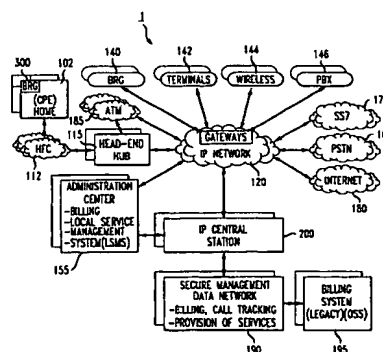
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(54) Method and device for integrated multimedia messaging service

(57) A multimedia messaging service is provided for use in a powerful, facilities-based, end-to-end Internet Protocol (IP) based network infrastructure that guarantees voice, data and video communication reliability and security to users for an integrated telephone, television and data network. The IP network multimedia messaging service provides an any-media messaging service to its users. The IP network user may send and receive mail messages in a variety of formats such as e-mail (text), voice mail (audio), or multimedia video mail (audio and video). A Graphical User Interface (GUI) is provided as one means for retrieving a user's stored mail messages. The GUI provides the user with a single means for identifying and accessing all the various types of mail messages which are stored and awaiting review; whether the mail message is in e-mail, voice-mail, or multimedia video mail format. Further, the system may provide the user control of the type of media by which the stored mail messages are to be retrieved and reviewed, regardless of the type of media used to create and store the message. For example, if a user has an e-mail message they can instruct the IP network multimedia message service to transform the text of the e-mail message into an audio message using voice synthesis. Similarly, if a user has an audio voice-mail message the system can transform the audio into a text (e-mail) message using voice recognition. The multimedia messaging service of the present invention may also enable a user to sort and/or prioritize mail messages based on a variety of user specified criteria such as the senders

identity, subject matter, date sent, priority specified by the sender, etc. The multimedia messaging service may include a multimedia message forwarding feature which enables the user to specify a remote location to which message waiting notification will be automatically forward and from which the user may instantaneously review the message in whatever media the user selects. The multimedia messaging service may enable the user to store the messages on their own equipment, e.g., within a PC or a Broadband Residential Gateway (BRG), or to archive the message within the system for a fee. The multimedia messaging service may also be equipped with a simple user friendly message waiting indicator for each IP address and a one touch multimedia messaging service message retrieval feature activation.

FIG. 1



Description

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to communication between users in diverse communication systems, and more particularly, to providing a broadband communication system including a messaging service for an Internet Protocol Telephony Network and public switched telephone network.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Present day telephony voice networks, have a network built around circuit switches, end offices, a toll network, tandem switches, and twisted wires. These voice networks are referred to as a public switched telephone network (PSTN) or plain old telephone service (POTS). Due to bandwidth limitations of plain old telephone service (POTS), there is an inherent inability to efficiently integrate multiple types of media such as telephony, data communication for personal computers (PC), and television (TV) broadcasts. Accordingly, a new broadband architecture is required. This new architecture gives rise to a new array of user services. Plain old telephone service (POTS) presently available within the PSTN typically have voice mail messaging systems that allows the POTS user to subscribe to and receive voice mail messages from a central office phone mail systems without any means for receiving text or video (multimedia) messages. Further, POTS do not have the capability to integrate multiple types of media such as telephony, PC using data, and TV, and thus do not have multimedia messaging capabilities.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Aspects of the invention include to providing broadband access capabilities or enhanced services for use in conjunction with a packetized network such as an Internet Protocol (IP) based system infrastructure.

[0004] Other aspects of the invention include providing one or more of the following either individually, or in any combination or subcombination:

- a new broadband architecture;
- broadband network capabilities, including local access;
- enhanced services for use in conjunction with a packetized network such as an Internet Protocol (IP) based system infrastructure. One such enhanced service includes a multimedia messaging service.

[0005] The present invention provides for a multimedia messaging service for use in a powerful, facilities-based, end-to-end Internet Protocol (IP) based network infrastructure that guarantees voice, data and video

communication reliability and security to users for an integrated telephone, television and data network. The IP network multimedia messaging service provides an any-media messaging service to its users. The IP network user may send and receive mail messages in a variety of formats such as e-mail (text), voice mail (audio), or multimedia video mail (audio and video). A Graphical User Interface (GUI) is provided as one means for retrieving a user's stored mail messages. The GUI provides the user with a single means for identifying and accessing all the various types of mail messages which are stored and awaiting review; whether the mail message is in e-mail, voice-mail, or multimedia video mail format. Further, the system may provide the user control of the type of media by which the stored mail messages are to be retrieved and reviewed, regardless of the type of media used to create and store the message. For example, if a user has an e-mail message they can instruct the IP network multimedia message service to transform the text of the e-mail message into an audio message using voice synthesis. Similarly, if a user has an audio voice-mail message the system can transform the audio into a text (e-mail) message using voice recognition. The multimedia messaging service of the, present invention may also enable a user to sort and/or prioritize mail messages based on a variety of user specified criteria such as the senders identity, subject matter, date sent, priority specified by the sender, etc. The multimedia messaging service may include a multimedia message forwarding feature which enables the user to specify a remote location to which message waiting notification will be automatically forward and from which the user may instantaneously review the message in whatever media the user selects. The multimedia messaging service may enable the user to store the messages on their own equipment, e.g., within a PC or a Broadband Residential Gateway (BRG), or to archive the message within the system for a fee. The multimedia messaging service may also be equipped with a simple user friendly message waiting indicator for each IP address and a one touch multimedia messaging service message retrieval feature activation.

[0006] Thus, the present invention provides integrated multimedia networks, including voice over IP (VoIP), with a user friendly flexible multimedia messaging service that integrates all types of mail messages so that a user can be notified of, identify, retrieve, and store all his mail messages with a single service in whatever media the user wishes.

[0007] Although the invention has been defined using the appended claims, these claims are exemplary and limiting to the extent that the invention is meant to include one or more elements from the apparatus and methods described herein and in the applications incorporated by reference in any combination or subcombination. Accordingly, there are any number of alternative combinations for defining the invention, which incorporate one or more elements from the specification (includ-

ing the drawings, claims, and applications incorporated by reference) in any combinations or subcombinations.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0008] Fig. 1 shows a schematic representation of a broadband network (e.g., broadband IP based network) in accordance with a preferred embodiment of aspects of the present invention.

[0009] Fig. 2 shows a block diagram of a preferred embodiment of a centralized control (IP central station) in accordance with aspects of the present invention.

[0010] Fig. 3 shows a block diagram of a preferred embodiment of a local control apparatus (broadband residential gateway) in accordance with aspects of the present invention.

[0011] Fig. 4 shows a detailed schematic representation of an exemplary embodiment of the broadband network shown in Fig. 1.

[0012] Fig. 5 is a signal flow diagram illustrating a typical on-network to off-network call according to one preferred method of operating the broadband network shown in Fig. 1.

[0013] Fig. 6 is a signal flow diagram illustrating a typical on-network to on-network call according to one preferred method of operating the broadband network shown in Fig. 1.

[0014] Figs. 7A and 7B are process flow diagrams illustrating one preferred method for storing messages and providing initial notification which is useful in the multimedia messaging service of the present invention operating with a broadband network.

[0015] Fig. 8A is a process flow diagram illustrating one preferred method for providing notification of a message(s) waiting which is useful in the multimedia messaging service of the present invention operating with a broadband network.

[0016] Fig. 8B is a process flow diagram illustrating one preferred method for providing notification of a message(s) waiting an access of a message log which is useful in the multimedia messaging service of the present invention operating with a broadband network.

[0017] Fig. 8C is a process flow diagram illustrating one preferred method for providing message retrieval and archiving of a message(s) which is useful in the multimedia messaging service of the present invention operating with a broadband network.

[0018] Fig. 9 provides an illustration of one exemplary graphical user interface for providing notification of a message(s) waiting to a broadband communication system user which is useful in the multimedia messaging service of the present invention operating with a broadband network.

[0019] Fig. 10 provides an illustration of one exemplary graphical user interface for providing multimedia messaging service login and a message waiting notification to a broadband communication system user which is useful in the multimedia messaging service of the

present invention operating with a broadband network. [0020] Fig. 11 is a process flow diagram illustrating one preferred method for providing message media type conversion capability which is useful in the multimedia messaging service of the present invention operating with a broadband network.

[0021] Fig. 12 provides an illustration of one exemplary graphical user interface for providing message media type conversion capability which is useful in the multimedia messaging service of the present invention operating with a broadband network.

[0022] Fig. 13 provides an illustration of one exemplary graphical user interface for providing message sorting and prioritizing capability which is useful in the multimedia messaging service of the present invention operating with a broadband network.

[0023] Fig. 14 is a process flow diagram illustrating one preferred method for providing remote message waiting notification capability which is useful in the multimedia messaging service of the present invention operating with a broadband network.

[0024] Fig. 15 provides an illustration of one exemplary graphical user interface for providing message notification location selection capability which is useful in the multimedia messaging service of the present invention operating with a broadband network.

[0025] Fig. 16 provides an illustration of one exemplary graphical user interface for providing message storage selection capability which is useful in the multimedia messaging service of the present invention operating with a broadband network.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0026] The present invention provides a user friendly flexible multimedia messaging service that integrates all types of mail messages, e.g., e-mail (text), voice-mail (audio) and multimedia video mail (audio and video), so that a user can be notified, identify, retrieve, and store all his mail messages with a single service in whatever media the user wishes. This multimedia messaging service which may be provided in a broadband IP based integrated communication system may include various methods of message waiting notification, user secure log in, message type conversion, message sort and prioritizing, user programmable location for message waiting notification, and user programmable message storage capabilities.

[0027] A new system is provided for broadband access and applications such as multimedia messaging service. Unless otherwise indicated by the appended claims, the present invention is not limited to the preferred embodiments described in this section but is applicable to other integrated multimedia communication systems.

I. Integrated Communication System Overview

[0028] Referring to Fig. 1, an exemplary embodiment of a broadband network 1. The broadband network generally provides interconnection between a plurality of customer locations utilizing various interconnection architectures including Internet Protocol (IP) based network, various existing systems (legacy systems) such as the public switched telephone network (PSTN), ATM networks, the Internet, signaling networks, as well as other systems. The broadband network provides versatile intelligent conduits that may carry, for example, Internet Protocol (IP) telephony or multimedia signals between the customer premises over, for example, the public switched telephone network, Internet, or wireless communication networks.

[0029] Again referring to Fig. 1, the broadband network 1 may include one or more customer premises equipment (CPE) units 102. The customer premise equipment 102 may be variously configured. In one example, the customer premise equipment 102 may include one or more local control devices such as a broadband residential gateway (BRG) 300. Although the broadband residential gateway is preferably disposed in a residence for many aspects of the invention, in exemplary embodiments, it may also be disposed in a business or other location. The broadband residential gateway 300 may be variously configured to provide one or more integrated communication interfaces to other devices within the customer premise equipment 102 such as televisions (TV), personal computers (PC), plain old telephone system (POTS) phone(s), video phones, IP enabled phones, and other devices. For example, the broadband residential gateway 300 may provide one or more telephone port connections (e.g., plain old telephone system), Ethernet connections, coaxial connections, fiber distributed data interface (FDDI) connections, wireless local area network (LAN) connections, firewire connections, and/or other connections to a plurality of devices such as plain old telephones, IP based phones, television converters, e.g., cable television (CATV) set top devices, televisions, digital televisions, high definition televisions (HDTV), video phones, and other devices. In exemplary embodiments, the broadband residential gateway 300 may support communications between any of the aforementioned devices in intra-premises calling and/or extra-premises calling. Further, when the broadband residential gateway 300 is used in a business environment, it can function as a private branch exchange or key type telephone system.

[0030] In Fig. 1, broadband residential gateway 300 is illustrated as a single physical device. This configuration is appropriate where centralization of maintenance and control is desirable. Alternatively, the broadband residential gateway 300 may be separated into more than one physical device allowing functionality to be distributed to a plurality of different physical locations in the

customer premise and/or broadband network 1. However, in many embodiments, having a centralized broadband residential gateway 300 located in a single location provides ease of maintenance, control, and re-configuration as well as a reduction in cost due to shared functionality. For example, the broadband residential gateway may be configured to provide the intelligence needed to allow each of the customer premises equipment devices to operate within the broadband network 1. For example, analog voice may be converted to digital data and packetized for transmission in an appropriate output protocol such as an Internet protocol (IP).

[0031] In exemplary embodiments, the broadband residential gateway 300 may function to couple devices within the customer premise equipment 102 to the rest of the broadband network 1 using any suitable broadband communication mechanism. In the embodiment shown in Fig. 1, the broadband residential gateway 300 utilizes a hybrid fiber-coaxial plant 112 to couple the broadband residential gateway 300 to the rest of the broadband network 1. The hybrid fiber-coaxial plant 112 may be preferred in many embodiments over other broadband communication mechanisms because of the large number of homes currently connected to cable networks, the capacity for shared access, and the ability for asymmetric data access speeds which allow high quantities of data to be distributed to the various devices in the customer premises equipment 112. The hybrid fiber-coaxial plant 112 may include coaxial cable and/or optical fiber networks in any suitable combination. The hybrid fiber-coaxial plant 112 may provide an intelligent broadband conduit between the broadband residential gateway 300 and a gateway such as the head-end hub (HEH) 115. The head-end hub 115 may be variously configured to provide various services and/or interconnections with the rest of the broadband network 1. For example, the head-end hub 115 may provide an interconnection point to gather and aggregate external services (e.g., off air and satellite video, public switched telephone network voice, multimedia messages, and Internet data) for distribution to and from the hybrid fiber-coaxial plant 112. With respect to telephony and multimedia calls, the head-end hub 115 may function as intelligent conduit for connection and communication between the hybrid fiber-coaxial plant 112 and external networks such as an IP network 120 and/or an ATM/frame relay/cell relay network 185.

[0032] The broadband network 1 may include any number of interconnected head-end hubs 115, IP networks 120, and/or ATM networks 185. Further, the IP network 120 and/or ATM network 185 may be connected to one or more other networks and devices such as:

- (1) external networks including a public switched telephone network (PSTN) 170, an signaling system 7 (SS7) network 170, an Internet 180, and/or a wireless network 144;
- (2) various components including one or more pri-

vate branch exchanges 146, terminals 142 including computers and wireless devices, and/or one or more stand alone broadband residential gateway 300;

(3) one or more administration centers 155;

(4) one or more secure network management data networks 190 such as a network operations center (NOC);

(5) one or more billing systems 195 such as OSS; and/or

(6) one or more centralized control centers such as what is referred to as an IP central station 200.

[0033] The IP network 120 and/or ATM network 185 may include one or more routers and/or other devices to route, for example, telephony calls, multimedia calls, signaling messages, administrative messages, programming messages and/or computer data between the various devices in the broadband network 1 such as the head-end hub 115, the public switched telephone network 160, the private branch exchange (PBX) 146, as well as the other devices discussed above. In preferred embodiments, the information traveling in the IP network 120 may be packetized and formatted in accordance with one of the Internet protocols. The IP network 120 may also include gateways to interface with the various other networks and/or devices. For example, the gateways may be distributed at the edge of the IP network where the IP network interfaces with one of the other devices or networks. Alternatively, the gateways interfacing the IP central station 200 to, for example, the Internet 180, public switched telephone network (PSTN) 160, signaling system 7 (SS7) 170, wireless networks 144, ATM/frame/cell relay networks 185 may be provided in the IP central station 200, or in both the IP network 120 and the IP central station 200, and/or partially distributed between the IP network 120 and the IP central station 200. Where the gateways are separated by an IP network 200, an appropriate transport protocol may be utilized to logically connect the IP central station 200 to the particular gateway.

[0034] The IP central station(s) 200 may be connected to, for example, one or more IP networks 120, ATM networks 185, secure management data networks 190, and/or administration centers 155. The IP central station 200 may be variously configured to include one or more servers and/or one or more gateways. In exemplary embodiments, the servers and gateways provide the necessary intelligence and traffic management capabilities to enable information, e.g., IP telephony signals, to travel through the broadband network 1. For example, the IP central station 200 may be configured to manage voice information transfer from the public switched telephone network 160, through the IP network 120, and into and out of one or more devices such as those connected to a broadband residential gateway 300. The IP central station may be configured to store various control and system information such as location, address,

and/or configurations of one or more broadband residential gateways 300, as well as other routing and call set-up information.

[0035] In exemplary embodiments, one or more administration centers 155 may be connected to the IP network 120 and provide billing and local directory number portability administration. The local number portability may be handled by one or more Local Service Management System (LSMS) which may be included in the administration center 155 and/or in the IP central station 200. Further, the Secure Management Data Network 190 may also include a mechanism for transferring various information such as billing, call tracking, and/or customer service provisioning. Various existing systems may be utilized to provide this information such as existing billing systems (OSS) 195 and/or one or more network operations center (NOC). The network operations centers may be included in the administration center 155, the IP central station 200, and/or the billing system 195. The network operations center (NOC) may be variously configured to include a translation server to allow communications with the various disparate entities (e.g., legacy systems) in the broadband network 1.

[0036] The IP network 120 and/or the ATM network 185 illustrated in Fig. 1 may include one or a plurality of sub-networks. Each of the sub-networks may include its own IP central station 200 in a distributed configuration, with certain routing data replicated across all IP central stations or each sub-network may be connected to a single centralized IP central station 200. Where the IP network 120 includes one or more sub-networks, each sub-network may be connected to multiple head-end hubs 115. Further, each head-end hub 115 may be connected to multiple hybrid fiber-coaxial plants 112, and each hybrid fiber-coaxial plant 112 may be connected to multiple pieces of customer premises equipment 102 and/or broadband residential gateways 300. The IP network 120 provides an interconnected broadband network which may be utilized to transport and route packetized information to and from diverse geographic locations and may be used on a national or international basis. Further, the IP network 120 and/or ATM network 185 may utilize private network facilities and/or may be provisioned over a shared network such as the Internet.

[0037] The IP central station 200 may be configured to provide connectivity for the broadband residential gateway 300 to the Internet 180 (e.g., World Wide Web (www)), as well as connectivity to other external networks such as public switched telephone network 160 and signaling system 7 (SS7) 170 for end-to-end voice, multimedia, and data applications, for example voice over IP telephony. IP packets traveling through the IP network provide for priority so that, for example, voice packets are given priority over data packets to maintain certain VoIP telephony QoS requirements and a leased line concept for packet traffic which may have an even higher priority. However, the system is sufficiently flexible so that the priority can be dynamically altered ac-

cording to customer preferences, variable billing rates, traffic patterns, and/or congestion.

A. Internet Protocol Central Station

[0038] Referring to Fig. 2, the IP central station 200 may be variously configured. In preferred embodiments, it may be configured to ensure seamless integration of IP based communication system including the IP network 120 with the public switched telephone network 160, signaling system 7 (SS7) network 170, and the Internet 180 so that packetized data, for example, voice calls and information data, is properly transferred between the broadband residential gateway 300, the public switched telephone network 160 and/or the Internet 180. In one embodiment, the hybrid fiber-coaxial plant 112, head-end hub 115, and IP network 120, provide a virtual signaling conduit for packetized voice and data which may, with the coordination of the IP central station 200, be provided in the appropriate format between the broadband residential gateway 300 and the public switched telephone network 160 and/or Internet 180.

[0039] Again referring now to Fig. 2, the IP central station 200 may include a central router 200, for example, a gigabit switch, which may be utilized to interconnect various servers and gateways contained in the IP central station 200. The central router 210 provides for example Ethernet switching and aggregate traffic between servers, gateways and the IP network 120 and/or ATM network 185 backbone. In one exemplary embodiment, the central router 210 provides high-speed, non-blocking IP and IP multicast Layer 3 switching and routing. The IP central station 200 may include one or more of the following servers: the least cost server (LCS) 255, the time of day (TOD) server 212, the dynamic host control protocol (DHCP) server, the trivial file transfer protocol (TFTP) server, and the domain name service (DNS) server 214, the system management (SM) server 216, the call manager (CM) server 218, the announcement server (AS) 220, the multimedia server (MS) 222, and/or the conference server (CS) 224. As illustrated in Fig. 2, the servers may be separate servers, for example the call manager server 218, or may be incorporated into a single server. In the exemplary embodiment, the dynamic host control protocol server 131, trivial file transfer protocol server 132, and the domain name service server 214 are each incorporated in a single server facility. Each server in the IP central station 200 may include computer(s), storage device(s), and specialized software for implementing particular predefined functions associated with each server. In this manner, the servers in the IP central station may be provisioned as a main server and one or more back-up servers to provide redundant processing capabilities. Similarly, the router may be implemented as a main router and a back-up router with similar routing functionality.

[0040] The IP central station 200 may also include, for example, one or more of the following gateways: a ele-

ment management gateway (EMG) 238, an accounting gateway (AG) 240, an Internet (Boarder) gateway (IG) 236, a signaling system 7 (SS7)) gateway (SG) 234, a voice gateway (VG) 232, and/or a multimedia gateway (MG) 230. The IP central station 200 may utilize one or more of these gateways to provide centralized system intelligence and control of voice and/or data IP packets.

[0041] In exemplary embodiments, the dynamic host control protocol server and domain name service server 214 may operate to dynamically assign IP addresses devices in the customer premise equipment 102. Where a dynamic IP assignment scheme is used, the customer premises equipment may be provided with one or a plurality of dynamic IP assignment when activated initially, and/or at the initiation of each active secession. Where an IP address is assigned when the device is initially activated, it may be desirable to assign a single IP address to a single broadband residential gateway and assign a port address to devices connected to the broadband residential gateway 300. In other embodiments, an individual IP address may be assigned to each device coupled to the broadband residential gateway 300. For example, the broadband residential gateway may include and/or be coupled to one or more cable modems, IP phones, plain old telephone system phones, computers, wireless devices, CATV converters, video phones, and/or other devices which each may be assigned a unique static and/or dynamic IP address and/or a port of a one of these IP addresses. The particular protocol for allocating IP addresses and/or ports may be specified using protocols defined in the dynamic host control protocol server 214. In exemplary embodiments, the dynamic host control protocol and DN server 214 may be configured to assign available IP addresses from address pools based, for example, on the identity or type of requesting device, the amount of use expected for the requesting device, and/or predefined assignment protocols defined in the dynamic host control protocol and DN server 214. In centralized embodiments, it may be desirable to configure the call manager (CM) 218 to provide sufficient information such that the domain name service server 214 can distinguish between static IP devices, dynamic IP devices, registered devices, unregistered devices, and registered devices that have been assigned to a particular class of service e.g., data vs. telephony, un-provisioned, vs. provisioned, etc.

[0042] The trivial file transfer protocol (TFTP) server 214 may be configured to transfer certain information to/from one or more broadband residential gateways 300. In exemplary embodiments, the trivial file transfer protocol server provides Data Over Cable Service Interface Specifications (DOCSIS) configuration information containing QoS parameters and other information required for the broadband residential gateway 300 to operate optimally.

[0043] The time-of-day (TOD) server 212 may include a suitable facility for maintaining a real time clock such as an RFC 868-compliant time server. In exemplary em-

bodiments, the time-of-day server 212 provides system messages and/or responses to system inquiries containing a coordinated time, e.g., universal coordinated time (UCT). The universal coordinated time may be used by any of the servers and/or devices in the broadband network 1. For example, the broadband residential gateway 300 may use the universal coordinated time to calculate the local time for time-stamping error logs.

[0044] The system management (SM) server 216 may include responsibility for the overall operational state and functioning of components the broadband network 1, either alone, or in combination with other system management servers 216. The system management (SM) server 216 may be variously configured to provide monitoring and administrative functions for devices within the broadband network 1. For example, the system management server 216 may be configured to provide management of various database functions, memory buffer functions, and software utility functions within the broadband network 1. Software management includes, for example, version control, generic control, and/or module control.

[0045] The least cost server (LCS) 255 may be variously configured to enable the system to determine the least cost routing of telephone and data transmission throughout the network. The least cost server 255 may also provide one or more broadband residential gateway users capability to select between, for example, cost and Quality of Service (QoS).

[0046] The announcement service (AS) server 220 may be variously configured. In exemplary embodiments, it may store and send announcements to specified destinations and/or all destinations based on instructions received by, for example, the call manager (CM) server 218. The announcement server 220 receives, for example, Media Gateway Control Protocol (MGCP) or later signaling (e.g., H.GCP - an ITU standard Gateway Control Protocol) control messages from the call manager 218, and sends announcements to one or more voice gateways (VG) 232 and/or the one or more broadband residential gateway 300 (e.g., using Real Time Protocol (RTP) packets). The announcement server 220 may send an announcement once, a predetermined number of times, or in a continuous loop. The announcement server 220 may detect when a phone or other device has been taken off-hook and play an advertisement or other announcement to the user. Where a user has signed-up for an advertising plan whereby phone rates are reduced in return for advertising revenue generated by the advertisements, the announcement server 220 may be utilized to track the number of individuals with a particular income, age, or other profile which hear the advertisement. The announcement server 220 may respond to requests from individual system devices such as one of the broadband residential gateways 300 and/or under control of, for example, the call manager 218. Where the announcement server is under control of the call manager 218, the call manager may

be configured to control various operating parameters of the announcement server. For example, the call manager 218 may request that certain announcements are sent once, a specified number of times, or in a continuous loop.

[0047] In still further embodiments, announcements may be generated elsewhere in the broadband network 1, stored as files, and distributed to one or more announcement servers via a file transfer protocol or resource such as the trivial file server 214 using one or more file transfer protocols. In many embodiments, it is desirable to store announcements in an appropriate encoding format (e.g., G.711 or G.729) within the Announcement Server. The announcement may have an audio component and/or a audio/video component. The audio/video component may be stored using a combination of an encoding format (e.g., G.711) and/or a standard file format such as wave (WAV), MPEG, and other suitable formats.

[0048] In one exemplary method of operation, a user picks up a telephone which sends a signal to the call manager 218. Subsequently, the call manager 218 may establish a connection to the announcement server 220 and play one or more pre-recorded and/or predetermined announcement (hypertext and/or audio). Signaling tones such as a busy signal may be played by the broadband residential gateway 300 or the call manager 218, but Special Information Tones (SIT) and/or messages may also be included as part of an announcement file. In this way, the user experience is enhanced such that the user receives a busy message and/or hypertext announcement providing one of several options for contacting the called party. The announcement server 220 may have information entered by a user using, for example, a broadband residential gateway to provide additional information to the called party. The additional information may include the ability to leave a message, type-in a chat note, page the called party, barge-in on the call, and/or other user or system defined call handling capabilities.

[0049] The announcement server 220 may also be programmed with various system messages such as an announcement indicating that a number dialed is incorrect or that the call did not go through as dialed, that the lines are busy, that all lines between two countries are currently busy, that the called party has changed numbers, that the called parties phone has been disconnected, that one or more system errors have occurred, and/or other announcement messages.

[0050] The call manager (CM) 218 may be variously configured. In exemplary embodiments, the call manager 218 provides a centralized call control center for supporting call set-up and tear-down in the broadband network 1. The call manager 218 may be configured to include trunk and line information maintenance, call state maintenance for the duration of a call, and/or user service features execution. The call manager 218 may also provide for call processing functions such as a stand-

ardized call model for processing the various voice connections such as voice over IP calls. In exemplary embodiments, a standardized "open" call model may be utilized which supports standardized application programming interfaces (APIs) to provide transport services and other user functions such as calling cards. An open application programming interface and call set-up interface in the call manager will enable third party applications to be loaded into the call manager 218 and broadband residential gateway 300. This will facilitate the development of third party applications for enhancing the functionality of components in the broadband network 1. For example, third parties and other equipment vendors may manufacture various broadband residential gateways 300 for use in the broadband network 1 by writing applications to support the open call model of the call manager 218. The call manager 218 and/or broadband residential gateway 300 may also be configured to execute and/or accept commands from a standardized scripting language which may generate instructions for the call manager 218 and/or broadband residential gateway 300 to execute various functions. The scripting functionality may include the ability to execute an entire call model including interfaces to the signaling system 7 (SS7) 170, public switched telephone network 160, IP network 120, ATM/frame/cell relay network 185, and/or other functions within, for example, IP central station 200 such as the multimedia server 222, announcement server 220, system management server 216, conference server 224, time of day server 212, least cost server 255, and/or domain name server 214.

[0051] The call manager 218 may also be configured to maintain the call states for each call it handles (e.g., a voice over IP call) and respond to system events created by, for example, the multimedia gateway control protocol (MGCP) messages and/or integrated services digital network user part (ISUP) messages for signaling system 7 (SS7) protocol that may occur during the processing of a call. Exemplary events handled by the call manager 218 include call state changes, call feature changes/call feature triggering events, changes in the status of lines and trunks, and/or error conditions. Further, the call manager 218 may interact with devices connected to a single circuit on the public switched telephone network 160 and/or a device connected to a port of the broadband residential gateway 300. In this manner, new devices may be added to the infrastructure and operate using the open call model contained in the call manager 218.

[0052] The call manager 218 may also include storage for subscriber and network configuration, a cache server for faster access to frequently used data, a routing engine for selecting an appropriate routing algorithm (e.g., least cost routing), and/or a service broker which provides the data and logic for specific services. In addition, the call manager 218 may include an authentication (AC) server 245 that provides authentication of various devices, objects, packets and users in the integrat-

ed multimedia system. In this manner, a user may verify the identity of the calling or called party.

[0053] The call manager 218 may interact with the signaling gateway (SG) 234, the accounting gateway (AG) 240, the element management gateway (EMG) 238, the voice gateway (VG) 232, and the multimedia gateway (MG) 230 using any suitable protocol such as IP and an interconnection mechanism such as the central router 210. In one preferred embodiment, the call manager 218 may be configured to utilize signaling messages such as: a) ISUP messages over Common Object Broker Architecture (COBRA) interface to and/or from signaling gateway 234, b) MGCP, SIP - simple internet protocol, H.GCP, and/or other suitable control messages to and/or from the announcement server 220, c) call event records in modified Radius format to the accounting gateway 240, d) Radius (or Enhanced Radius or compatible protocol) control messages to and/or from the voice gateway 232 and/or the broadband residential gateways 300, and e) signaling network management protocol (SNMP) messages to and/or from the element management gateway 238.

[0054] The call manager 218 may incorporate one or more databases. For example, the call manager 218 may include database information such as (1) a resources database that provides an identification of what resources are connected to the broadband network 1 and their current state; (2) a trunk/gateway database that indicates which gateway serves what circuits in a trunk; (3) a customer database which indicates whether a call is authorized, identifies what services a line supports and determines whether a telephone number is on or off the integrated IP communication network; (4) a numbering plan / least cost routing database which provides routing information that enables the IP central station 200 to choose the correct trunk as a function of the call number; and (5) a local number portability (LNP) database that indicates the North American Numbering Plan (NANP) and associated prefixes which are open for association with the number portability service; and (6) an address of the service control point (SCP) towards which requests for translating these local portability numbers should be routed.

[0055] In exemplary embodiments, the broadband network 1 includes equipment compatible with the COBRA standard. COBRA may be utilized to allow applications from a plurality of vendors to operate with each other. The COBRA standard allows a company, such as AT&T, to build its network using multi-vendor equipment and yet ensure seamless integration and operation. Some of the major areas covered by COBRA v. 2.2 includes: Inter-ORB Bridge Support, General Inter-ORB Protocol (GIOP) support, Internet Inter-ORB Protocol (IIOP) support, and Environment Specific Inter-ORB Protocol (ESIOP) support. The call manager 218 may integrate these protocols to facilitate call set-up with diverse equipment. This is advantageous in that equipment from a plurality of vendors may inter-operate over

the broadband network 1 without modification.

[0056] The multimedia server (MS) 222 may be variously configured. For example, one or more multimedia servers may provide support for multimedia messaging service and/or the overall management of multimedia voice and mail messages transmitted across the broadband network 1. The multimedia server may be configured to support e-mail (e.g., html) messages, voice mail (audio) messages, and/or video mail (audio and video) messages. The multimedia messages may include standard pre-configured system messages, advertising messages, and/or user defined messages. In either event, where the messages are stored in a centralized location, the multimedia server may provide such storage. Where the multimedia server 222 provides storage for the multimedia messages, a database may be utilized for indexing, storage, and retrieval of such messages. In exemplary systems, the user may access pre-determined ones of these messages. The multimedia server 222 may utilize IP as a method of communicating with other devices across the broadband network 1.

[0057] The conference server (CS) 224 may be configured to provide for multiparty conference calls using, for example, IP voice packets during an IP telephony or multimedia session call. The conference server 224 may include specialized software that runs on a computing platform having associated multiplexing and demultiplexing capability for segregating and aggregating user information packets. For example, the conference server may log several calls into a conference session. When information packets are sent from one or more phones, they are aggregated and sent to the other phones on the conference call. The conference server 224 may use any suitable communication protocol such as H.GCP or SIP. The conference server 224 may function to aggregate user information from two or more users onto a single call path. The conference server 224 may include one or more "call-in numbers" and be controlled from any location, e.g., a centralized operator location and/or one or more broadband residential gateways 300. It may be desirable to have the conference server 224 configured such that some callers simply monitor the call without voice interruption while other callers have both voice transmit and receive capabilities. Where a caller is not given the privileges associated with active participation in the call, voice packets from these users are discarded. For example, a CEO may have a conference call with a plurality of financial advisors and invite the press to listen on the call without interruption capabilities.

[0058] The gateways in the IP central station 200 may be configured to provide translation of signals to and/or from the various servers in the IP central station 200, the IP network 120, the public switched telephone network 160, the signaling system 7 (SS7) network 170, the Internet 180, and/or the secured management data (SMD) network 190. The gateways typically support one or more of the following group of functions: call process-

ing; signaling system 7 (SS7) connectivity; billing support; OAM&P support; connection to public switched telephone network; control CoS / QoS parameters; and enhanced services.

[0059] The voice gateway (VG) 232 may be connected to the public switched telephone network 160 and operate to convert between IP based voice packets and standard public switched telephone network 160 voice traffic. Voice gateway 232 may be configured as multi-frequency (MF) or ISUP gateways on a per-T1 basis. Where multi-frequency (MF) trunks are used, one embodiment utilizes signaling between the call manager 218 and the voice gateway 232 using MGCP, SIP, H. GCP and/or other compatible protocol. Multi-frequency trunks may be compatible with Feature Group D (FGD), Operator Service (OS) Signaling protocol and/or Termination Protocol (TP).

[0060] The IP central station 200 may be variously connected to the public switched telephone network. For example, the IP central station 200 may be connected directly to the public switched telephone network using, for example a bearer channel (e.g., a T1 or T3 carrier) and/or interconnected using one or more networks such as an IP network and/or ATM/frame/cell relay network 185. Where a T1 network is utilized, it may be desirable to utilize one or more of ISUP or MF, FGD, and OS to interconnect a service bureau in the public switched telephone network 160. Alternatively, the service bureau in the public switched telephone network 160 may be interconnected using an alternative network arrangement such as an IP network 120 and/or a ATM/frame/cell relay network 185. The service bureau may coordinate with the IP central station 200 in providing operator services, directory services and provisioning for 311, 611, and 711 services. Emergency 911 services may be routed to an E911 tandem switch that has the appropriate databases and interfaces with a Public Safety Answering Position (PSAP). Emergency 911 services may be coordinated by the call manager 218 and/or public switched telephone network based service bureau.

[0061] Voice gateway 232 may be router-based and include one or more voice feature cards and/or DSP Module cards to perform voice processing. The voice gateway 232 may optionally include host processors, LAN/WAN ports, Ethernet ports, T1 or E1 telephony interface cards, Voice Feature Cards with DSP Modules providing voice compression transcoding (G.711 and G. 729), carrier-quality echo cancellation with 8 ms-32 ms tail length, a de-jitter buffer which adapts to delay variations in the network in order to minimize the delay, packet loss concealment that generates concealment frames for lost packets using information from previously received data, and/or tone detection and generation. This function detects Multi-Frequency (MF) tones and generates MF and call processing tones (e.g. dial tone, call-waiting tone etc.).

[0062] In exemplary embodiments, the voice gateway

232 may include T1/E1 interfaces with internal Channel Service Units (CSUs). It may also be desirable to configure the voice gateway 232 such that ISUP, MF and Centralized Attendant Services (CAS) trunks are supported with a configuration done on a per T1 basis. Additionally, multi-frequency tones and Centralized Attendant Services may utilize a "robbed bits" communication scheme where bits are "robbed" from sub-frames to transmit in-band signaling. The multi-frequency tones may be converted to and/or from, for example, simple gateway control protocol (SGCP) signal requests and events by the voice gateway 232. For example, multi-frequency tones and/or lower level signaling and timing functions may be translated to and/or from any of the following indications: simple gateway control protocol Notify functions, simple gateway control protocol Notification Requests, Connection requests, Modify Connection requests, off-hook and/or on-hook indications.

[0063] An Ethernet interface with a RJ-45 connector may be used to connect the voice gateway 232 to the central router 210 (e.g., Gigabit Switch or High Speed Router (HSR)). The multimedia gateway control protocol may be used as the interface between the voice gateway 232 and the call manager 218. For example, call control, signaling, and multimedia data stream, real time protocol (RTP) connections, IP addresses, UDP ports, codec choice etc, may be configured in any suitable manner such as by using a multimedia gateway control protocol. In exemplary embodiments, audio streams may be passed directly between customer premises equipment 102 using real time protocol connections over, for example, a user datagram protocol (UDP). Thus, the multimedia gateway control protocol may be utilized to request the voice gateway 232 to initiate, cancel, and/or otherwise modify connections in order to set up and tear down RTP media streams. A similar procedure may also be utilized to request continuity tests and results.

[0064] In exemplary embodiments, it may be desirable to adapt the IP network to carry signaling system 7 (SS7) Transaction Capabilities Application Part (TCAP) messages over the IP network 120 and/or the ATM/frame/cell relay network 185. The transport of signaling system 7 (SS7) transaction capabilities application part (TCAP) messages over the packet networks allows signaling operations to be supported by multiple connections to the same host, multiple host connections, and distributed processing of call set-up information using, for example, multiple call managers 218 in the broadband network 1. Thus, the IP network 120 and/or ATM/frame/cell relay network may be utilized to interconnect a plurality of ESS switches to transport signaling information, voice, and/or data. In embodiments where the signaling gateway (SG) 234 is configured to support signaling system 7 (SS7) signaling transport using transaction capabilities application part (TCAP) messages, it may be desirable to include a translator for converting between multimedia gateway control protocol (MGCP)

messages and transaction capabilities application part (TCAP) messages and/or ISDN User Part (ISUP) messages.

[0065] The point where ISUP and TCAP messages are terminated at a signaling system 7 (SS7) signaling gateway is defined as a Service Switching Point (SSP) to the signaling system 7 (SS7) network 170. The call manager 218 may be configured with a standardized Application Programming Interface (API) to allow interaction with the signaling system 7 (SS7) by, for example, sending and/or receiving ISUP and TCAP messages from a service switching point (SSP). Full class 5 signaling system 7 (SS7) functionality may be included in the call manager 218 including the ability to provide all of the information necessary for billing as defined in the GR-246-Bellcore standard. The signaling gateway 234 may be arranged to perform: signaling system 7 (SS7) message handling (message discrimination, message distribution, and message routing); signaling link management (e.g., link activation, deactivation); signaling route management (managing Point Code [PC] route status based on route received management messages such as Transfer Prohibited, Transfer Allowed, Transfer Restricted, etc.); and signaling traffic management (diversion of traffic based on unavailability, availability, restriction of signaling link, route, and Point Code.) The signaling system 7 (SS7) architecture supports the necessary redundancy component scheme for system reliability and availability during scheduled maintenance and/or software/hardware upgrades. The signaling gateway 234 may be configured to directly provide for lower level signaling system 7 (SS7) processing.

[0066] In exemplary embodiments, the signaling gateway 234 interacts with the call manager 218 using an appropriate open interface (e.g., Common Object Request Broker Architecture (COBRA)). In these embodiments, it may be desirable for translation software in the signaling gateway 234 to add Message Transfer Part (MTP) layer information to the ISUP and/or TCAP data to create a complete signaling system 7 (SS7) message. The complete signaling system 7 message may then be sent to the Signaling Transfer Point (STP) in the external signaling system 7 (SS7) network 170. Conversely, the signaling gateway 234 may be configured to remove ISUP or TCAP application layer data from the signaling system 7 (SS7) messages received from the STP prior to converting the information to an appropriate open interface (e.g., COBRA) and forwarding the information to the call manager 218 via the central router 210.

[0067] The accounting gateway (AG) 240 may be configured to receive messages representing events from the call manager 218 via a suitable transport mechanism such as the central router 210. Typically, two messages are received for each call, the first when the call is established, and second when the call terminates. In the case of unsuccessful calls, only the failure message will be logged. The messages provide details about the

calling and called parties, the timing of the call set-up, the duration and the quality of the call. Accounting gateway 240 may be duplicated using a redundant computer, with each gateway having dual-mirrored disks. The accounting gateway 240 stores usage records and may then distribute them to linked destinations (e.g., billing centers) for processing. Billing centers typically include bill processors that receive accounting information from the accounting gateway 240 and generate appropriate on-line or paper billing to customers. The accounting gateway may be configured to accommodate multiple days worth of accounting records such as the records for one day, two days, three days, four days, a week, or a month. The period in which the data is retained in the accounting gateway may be dependent on business needs, hardware restrictions, and/or the billing cycle. For example, as the end of the billing cycle nears, it may be desirable to shorten the period the accounting gateway holds the data such that calls placed the day the bills are printed are included on the bills. Further, the accounting gateway may both retain and forward data to the billing centers. In this manner, if the equipment at the billing center fails, the accounting gateway 240 may serve as a backup. Similarly, the billing center may act as a backup where the accounting gateway 240 fails.

[0068] An Automatic Message Accounting (AMA) format is typically used by circuit-switching systems, packet-switching systems, and other network elements to provide billing usage measurements data (e.g., the Bellcore® Automatic Message Accounting Format (BAF)). This data may be utilized either to permit charging the customer for use of network resources or to permit charging other carriers (e.g., Inter-Exchange Carrier (IEC) and other Local Exchange Carrier (LEC)) for assistance in placing call connections. The accounting gateway 240 may be configured to convert this information into an Automatic Message Accounting Format (AMA) Format (e.g., BAF) records and send these records to the external billing systems using, for example, a TFTP (trivial file transfer protocol). Time-stamp accuracy is typically based on the accuracy of the call manager 218 clock which may be derived from the TOD 212 server. To create appropriate AMA records, the event information produced by the call manager 218 preferably has appropriate information for the telephone service specified such as phone number of the calling party (customer), phone number of the called party (customer), time of call, duration of the phone call, and use of any discretionary features. Different AMA structures may be generated between On-Net calls (defined as within a network service provider IP network 120) vs. Off-Net calls (defined as outside of service provider IP network - e.g. public switched telephone network) for billing purposes.

[0069] The element management gateway (EMG) 238 may provide system management functionality that includes, for example: a) status and performance monitoring for the Operation Administration, Maintenance,

and Provisioning center, to gauge the ongoing operation of applications; b) extensive information exchange with a network operations center responsible for ongoing maintenance of one or more applications; c) customizable operations interface to allow the network operations center to view only information required, thus reducing the time spent filtering information; d) centralize distributed application configuration allowing for the centralized configuration of objects residing on a plurality of machines; e) proactive network management capabilities to remove the need for constant operator intervention making the day-to-day operations more efficient; and/or f) intelligent display of status information to separate critical issues from low-priority problems allowing the operation center to assign resources to the right problems at the right time.

[0070] The multimedia gateway (MG) 230 may be configured to connect to the public switched telephone network 160 and to convert IP based multimedia packets into standard public switched telephone network 160 traffic. The multimedia gateway 230 may include an intelligent trunking interface that communicates with the call manager 218 for automatic trunk sizing and allocation between the IP network 120 and the public switched telephone network 160. For example, when a system user at the customer premises is using a PC and/or a multimedia phone to communicate with a traditional public switched telephone network 160 user, the communication session involves the transmission of video and audio data. The bandwidth that is required for this type of communication is much greater than that required for a PSTN-to-PSTN voice call or an IP-to-PSTN voice call. The multimedia gateway 230, as the interface between two systems, may negotiate a larger bandwidth to facilitate the call if the called party is also video enabled. This bandwidth negotiation process typically occurs with a SESS or a Local Digital Switch within the public switched telephone network 160. Typically, a multimedia call, including live video, audio and data, will require bandwidth ranging from 56K to 1.544 Mbps. However, as the number of users sharing the same link grows, the quality of the transmission deteriorates significantly. The multimedia gateway 230 must be able to monitor bandwidth usage and make appropriate adjustments so as to maintain an acceptable quality of service. Further, it may be desirable for the call manager 218 and the multimedia gateway 230 to communicate between themselves and/or the customer premises equipment 102 to determine whether the user has authorized the additional bandwidth and hence expense of the call. For example, even where a called and/or calling party is video enabled, it may nonetheless refuse to authorize payment for the increased bandwidth necessary for video.

[0071] The Internet gateway (IG) 236 may be connected to the Internet (e.g., World Wide Web (www)) and provide a means for IP based data packets to be routed between the IP network 120 and the Internet 180. Alter-

natively, IP based voice packets may be routed via the Internet 180. In exemplary embodiments, the Internet gateway 236 routes data-only packets which share the same priority level with other lower priority, non-real-time traffic consistent with computer data communications presently experienced with the Internet 180. Consequently, low priority and low latency data traffic on the IP network 120 utilize the Internet gateway 236 to communicate with other IP data networks such as the www. Voice packets may be routed through another network such as the ATM/frame/cell relay network 185, a private IP network 120, and/or the public switched telephone network 160 where committed information rates may be easily obtained.

[0072] In exemplary embodiments, the broadband network 1 includes the interfaces which enable connections to existing Operation, Maintenance and Provisioning (OAM&P) 195 systems that support, billing, accounting, provisioning and/or configuration management functions. A Secured Management Data (SMD) Network 190 may be utilized to connect the OAM&P 195 to the accounting gateway 240 and element management gateway 238. The Secure Management Data network 190 may include a Network Service Division's NSD Net. The Secure Management Data network 190 helps ensure that only secure communication can occur between the IP central station 200 and the OAM&P 195. This eliminates one potential means of tampering with the billing and provisioning functions in the OAM&P. The billing systems (OSS) 195 may include the Network Operations Center (NOC). The NOC may include a translation server which includes functions for allowing communications and control of diverse networks.

B. Broadband Residential Gateway (BRG)

[0073] Referring to Fig. 3, a preferred embodiment for a broadband residential gateway (BRG) 300 will now be described and explained. The broadband residential gateway 300 may be configured as the interface unit between the remainder of the customer premise equipment 102 devices and the external network. The broadband residential gateway 300 may be connected to the remainder of the broadband network 1 using any suitable mechanism such as a gateway directly into an IP network and/or a cable connection. In the most preferred embodiments, a hybrid fiber-coaxial plant connection is utilized such as hybrid fiber-coaxial (HFC) plant 112. The hybrid fiber-coaxial plant 112 allows numerous broadband residential gateways 300 to be included on an existing hybrid fiber-coaxial plant 112 without modification to the plants infrastructure.

[0074] The broadband residential gateway 300 may be variously configured to, for example, provide high-speed cable modem capabilities to interconnect one or more associated PCs with each other and with the remainder of the broadband network 1, provide functionality to one or more TVs (using, for example, either an

integrated or separate decoder functionality, e.g., set top box 350), one or more telephone connections such as plain old telephone service (POTS) phones and/or digital telephones, displays, wireless interfaces, voice processing, remote control interface, display interface, and/or administrative functions. In exemplary embodiments, the broadband residential gateway 300 may a) providing conversion between analog voice and IP voice packets, b) multiplexing/demultiplexing streams of IP voice packets, c) supporting multiplexing/demultiplexing of multiple incoming and outgoing signals including multiple voice, multimedia, data, system administration, and/or TV information signals.

[0075] Where the elements of the broadband residential gateway 300 are interconnected, the interconnection may be provided by one or more data buses, for example, a high speed bus (HSB) 360, processor bus 380, and/or other interconnection system. The high speed bus 360, 380 may be configured to provide a flexible conduit for transferring information between the internal hardware, processors and ports. In exemplary embodiments of the broadband residential gateway 300, the high speed bus 360 may include one or more of the following functional units a) a universal remote control receiver module 365 for receiving wireless (e.g., infrared, and/or RF) signals (e.g., keyboard signals and/or remote control signals) for control of the broadband residential gateway 300 and/or any connected devices, b) a display, display driver, touch screen logic module for driving one or more local and/or remote displays for interfacing with the broadband residential gateway 300 and/or one or more connected devices, c) one or more TV port modules 336 for interconnecting televisions, set-top devices, and/or other audiovisual devices to the broadband residential gateway 300, d) one or more data port modules 334 for connecting/interconnecting data enabled devices (e.g., personal computers, palm top devices, etc.), e) one or more telephony port modules 332 for interconnecting one or more analog and/or digital telephones, f) one or more peripheral port modules 342 for interconnecting one or more peripheral devices such as disk drives, data storage devices, video cassette recorders, DVD devices, audio devices, video devices (e.g., camcorders, digital cameras, digital video recorders, stereos, etc.), g) one or more external/internal intercom modules 344 for interconnecting remote intercom and/or security monitoring devices, h) one or more wireless interface modules 345 for interconnecting with various wireless extension devices such as wireless TVs, cordless and/or wireless telephones, wireless LANs, etc.) one or more voice recognition/voice synthesis modules 355 for generating voice announcements, voice messages, and voice prompts and for recognizing voice generated commands and data, j) set-top box module 350 for performing the functions associated with a set-top box locally and/or for communicating with one or more remotely coupled set-top boxes, k) memory 322 (e.g., DRAM, RAM, flash, and/or other memory) for stor-

ing information and operating data within the broadband residential gateway 300, l) transceiver 302 for communicating with one or more external broadband networks m) operating program store 330 (e.g., ROM, flash, etc.) for storing at least portions of the operating programs for the broadband residential gateway 300 and/or interconnected devices, n) security processor, smart card and/or credit card interface module 340 for providing secure processing functions and/or credit card/smart card transaction functions, and/or o) distributed processing controller 306 which may be a microprocessor and/or one or more interconnected distributed processing modules for controlling the broadband residential gateway 300. Where the distributed processing controller 306 includes one or more distributed processing modules, the modules may include a telephony processing module (P1) 308, data processing module (P23) 310, video processing module (P3) 312, auxiliary processing module (P4) 314, IP processing module (P5) 316, and/or an operations administration maintenance and provisioning processing module (P6) 318 interconnected through one or more busses such as processor bus 380. The processor bus 380 and/or high speed bus 360 may include any suitable interconnect bus including intelligent bus configurations incorporating smart buffer logic (not shown in Fig. 3) to facilitate data transfer between interconnected processors and/or modules. The various modules and/or processing components of the broadband residential gateway 300 may be powered by, for example, a power supply unit (not shown). Each of the individual modules of the broadband residential gateway will now be described in more detail.

[0076] The transceiver 302 may include circuits for converting digital signals to and from RF signals suitable for transmission across a broadband network such as the hybrid fiber-coaxial plant 112. The transceiver 302 may include one or more input/output ports such as a cable interface (e.g., an F connector cable connection) and/or a fiber optic interface connected to a communication media (e.g., hybrid fiber-coaxial Plant 112). The transceiver 302 may be compatible with the DOCSIS 1.0 or later specifications. For signaling purposes, the broadband residential gateway 300 may be compatible with the Media Gateway Control Protocol (MGCP) or other compatible signaling protocol (e.g., SIP or H.GCP) to support telephony applications. The transceiver 302 may serve as a modem, a translator and/or a multiplexer/demultiplexer. Data received from the network may be de-multiplexed and placed on the data bus for dispatch to the appropriate peripherals and/or ports. Data from the various ports and peripherals may be multiplexed together for distribution over one or more broadband networks (e.g., the hybrid fiber-coaxial (HFC) plant 112). Where a hybrid fiber-coaxial plant 112 is utilized, the data may be multiplexed onto various frequency bands of the hybrid fiber-coaxial plant 112 in a continuous data stream(s) and/or packetized data stream(s). To facilitate data transfer for various networks, the trans-

ceiver 302 may include one or more registers for data queuing and/or IP tunneling of data packets across the broadband network.

[0077] Although the illustration of a display, display drivers, and touch screen logic device 338 suggests that the a display is integral to the broadband residential gateway 300, alternative embodiments of the broadband residential gateway 300 may provide a user interface via the TV screen, PC screen, video telephone, and/or other display device in addition to, or in lieu of, a display integral to the broadband residential gateway 300.

[0078] The peripheral ports module 342 may include a plurality of ports providing connectivity to external peripherals. Exemplary interfaces include, PCI, Firewire, USB, DB25, etc. Devices which incorporate one or more of these interfaces may utilize the broadband residential gateway 300 to interconnect to the remainder of the broadband network 1.

[0079] The external/internal Intercom Module (IM) 344 may include one or more microphones/speakers, voice CODECs, telephony processors, and/or interface ports. Where an intercom module 344 is utilized, the built-in circuitry may be configured to detect, for example, unused plain old telephone system telephone(s) and generates a special intercom tone on these unused telephones. In this manner, existing plain old telephone system telephones, digital phones, and/or other devices may serve as an intercom throughout the residence. The controller 306 (e.g., such as the P1 telephony processor 308) may function to command the intercom module 344 to determine an appropriate intercom path to select an intercom connection between various locations. In exemplary embodiments, the CODEC may be configured to convert the analog voice signal into IP packets for transmission over one or more data ports 334, TV ports 336, display modules 338, telephony ports 332, peripheral ports 342, external/internal intercom ports 344, wireless interface ports 345, and/or set-top boxes 350.

[0080] In yet further embodiments, multiple broadband residential gateways 300 may be configured through, for example, IP tunneling, to set-up an intercom connection between multiple remote broadband residential gateways 300. In this manner, an administrative assistant at the office may be contacted via an intercom connection present at the users home. Thus, one or more individuals disposed at either local and/or remote locations with diverse types of equipment may communicate as an intercom group without the need to communicate via normal dialing procedures.

[0081] In addition to intercom services, the intercom module 344 may also configure intercom services for other telephony services (e.g., extension transfer, call conferencing, internal caller ID), high speed data services (e.g., LAN connections), facsimile transmission/reception, e-mail transmission/reception, video conferencing, and/or CATV/HDTV (Cable Television/High Def-

inition Television) using standard industry protocols such as DOCSIS 1.0 or higher and IP tunneling transmissions. These services are advantageous in that once configured, the user may simulate a work environment in his home.

[0082] Though processing may be accomplished by a single processor performing all functions (e.g., processing controller 306), in the preferred embodiment shown in Fig. 3, the architecture employs a distributed processing controller 306, and a plurality of processors P1-P6 308-318. In the distributed processing architecture, each of the plurality of processors P1-P6 may be configured to have a dedicated function to provide predetermined services or applications. The processors may be coupled together via any suitable mechanism such as the processor bus 380 and/or high speed bus (HSB) 360. The first processor P1 308 may include telephony applications such as call set-up, call tear down, and call functions; the second processor P2 310 may include management functions such as distribution and coordination of data within the various devices of the broadband residential gateway 300; the third processor P3 312 may include video processing functions for configuring control panels, screen displays of attached devices, video conference calls, MPEG decoding functions and other video processing functions; the fourth processor P4 314 may include an auxiliary processor for off loading special processing functions such as numeric processing; the fifth processor P5 316 may include interface input/output processing (e.g., text to voice and vice versa) and/or Internet protocol (IP) processing functions for configuring data to communicate with the remainder of the broadband network 1 and/or devices attached to the broadband residential gateway 300 such as IP telephones or IP enable PCs; and the sixth processor P6 318 may include processing functions for Operation, Maintenance and Provisioning (OAM&P) processing. Each of the above processors may be an entirely separate processing unit with included RAM, ROM, Flash memory, or may share RAM, ROM, and/or Flash memory. Where shared RAM, ROM, and/or Flash memory is utilized, the memory may be located within the distributed processor controller 306 and/or on the processor bus 380. Alternatively, the memory may be integrated into the operating program store 330 and/or into memory 322.

[0083] The Distributed Processing Controller 306 with its associated processors (P1-P6) may be coupled to the various elements of the broadband residential gateway 300 so as to enable proper operation of each of the individual components. For example, the distributed processing controller 306 (with any associated processors (P1-P6)) may also coupled to the security processor, smart card / credit card, and interface module 340, the peripheral port(s) module 342, and/or the External/Internal Intercom Module 344 for providing control and coordination among devices coupled to the high speed bus 360.

[0084] The display 338 may include, for example, an interactive LED/LCD module positioned in a suitable location such as within or attached to the broadband residential gateway 300. The display 338 may include an interface to notify, display and receive user inputs and processing status. The display 338 may be configured to display various informational status such as multimedia mail, called ID, call logs, call in progress and associated information, call waiting information, call conferencing, and/or other call related information. The display 338 may provide a display of real time status of the various devices connected to the broadband residential gateway 300 as well as any current connections, calls, and/or data transfers. The display 338 may also include touch screen capabilities that allow information to be input via a plurality of interrelated on-screen prompts, on-screen icons, and/or a keypad (e.g., an alphanumeric keyboard). The keypad may be a remote control, numeric keyboard, and/or alphanumeric keyboard.

[0085] In one embodiment of the display 338 operation, a user may touch an icon representing a pending voicemail and/or multimedia mail message. The panel may be configured to send an electronic signal to the processing controller 306 and/or an attached processor such as the telephony processor. On receiving the signal, the P1 telephony processor 308 may be configured to generate an IP packet via the transceiver 302 across portions of the broadband network 1 to the multimedia server 222 in IP central station 200. The multimedia server 222 may authenticate the request by, for example, verifying location of the request and/or the identity of the requesting party. Where identity of the calling party is being verified, the user enter an access password by an audio and/or keyboard request. Where an audio request is generated, the user may utilize the external / internal intercom module 344 of the broadband residential gateway 300, or via a text message entered into the display 338. The user may then enter the appropriate access code via the onscreen soft keypad, microphone, and/or keyboard. Alternatively, the message could be stored locally in the broadband residential gateways 300 memory 322 and depending on whether there is a password lock on the broadband residential gateway 300, the user may not have to enter a password to access the message. Where the message is stored locally in the broadband residential gateways 300 memory 322 rather than IP central station, the display 338 simply recalls the message from memory and presents to the user to provide one-touch instant message retrieval.

[0086] In embodiments where the broadband residential gateway 300 supports multiple mailboxes, the icons on the LCD/LED may be personalized to show the identity of the owner of the message. Each user may have a different password to ensure privacy of access. An activity log which tracks past and present messages and/or archives multimedia messages may be presented on display 338. The archive may be stored locally, or at a remote location such as IP central. The archive may

be utilized by the user to recall messages which have long since been erased from local storage but may be retrieved from IP central on tape and/or disk storage. This is preferably an optional feature for those users who are less security conscious. The multimedia messages need not be displayed only on display 338. In alternate embodiments, any of the peripheral devices attached to the broadband residential gateway 300 are capable of receiving the multimedia messages.

[0087] The memory 322 may be variously configured to include one or more field-upgradeable card slots for permitting memory expansion. Certain users may wish to enable higher end applications such as near video on demand (e.g., pausing of shows via buffering in memory), video conferencing of multiple users, multi-party conferences, call waiting for multiple parties, etc. Accordingly, the use of a broadband residential gateway 300 allows the user to upgrade memory via inserting additional cards. Alternatively, the user may use system memory in IP central and buffer data remotely.

[0088] Operating program store 330 may be configured to receive updates. This may be accomplished by having the user replace one or more memory cards or automatically by the IP central station downloading new operating code into one or more residential gateways 300.

[0089] As previously indicated, smart buffer logic (SBL) may be coupled to the telephony port(s) 332, data port(s) 334, TV port(s) 336, peripheral port(s) 342, and/or the distributed processing controller (DPC) 306. Where the smart buffer logic is utilized, it may function to buffer the IP packets for delivery over the communication network such as the hybrid fiber-coaxial plant 112. In addition, the smart buffer logic may include selectable switching and routing algorithms based on services and applications associated with each port. Depending on the destination of the IP traffic, the smart buffer logic may multiplex signal from various devices to effect faster information transfer. The smart buffer logic may also allow direct memory access between memory 322 and one or more of the devices and/or ports coupled to the high speed bus 360.

[0090] The telephony port(s) 332 may include various interface circuitry (e.g., analog interface, logic and firmware for interfacing with the Plain Old Telephone (POTs) telephones). Also the telephony port(s) 332 may also be configured to include user interface logic, voice processing logic, voice activity detector logic, voice CODECs, and DTMF (dual tone multi-frequency) tone sensing logic. Echo cancellation and automatic gain control may also be utilized in the telephony port(s) 332 circuitry. In one embodiment, RJ-11 connectors for a plurality of lines (e.g., 4) are provided for connection to one or more existing plain old telephone system 110 telephone units. However, the broadband residential gateway 300 may contain any number of telephone connection ports. In this manner, any number of existing user phone may connected directly to the broadband resi-

dential gateway 300 without modification. Alternatively, the broadband residential gateway can be configured to support, in addition to or as alternative to the plain old telephone system telephone units, ISDN telephones and/or other digital phones (e.g., IP telephones) using an appropriate interface.

[0091] The data port(s) 334 interface may be variously configured. In one configuration, the data ports include high speed data service connections to, for example, a personal computer (PC) using a LAN connection. For example, the data ports 334 may include an Ethernet 802.3 connection compatible with category 5 unshielded twisted pair (UTP) cable and a RJ-45 connector. The data port(s) 334 may include the necessary interface circuitry for coupling to remote computers.

[0092] The TV port(s) 336 may include an interface for conventional television, HDTV and/or CATV services. The TV port(s) 336 typically have one or more F-connectors used for coaxial cable connection to a TV set(s). The TV ports may be configured to connect to a set top box (STB) via the F-connector or directly to a remote television. In embodiments where the set top box is co-located with the television, the data supplied over the TV ports may be either analog and/or digital information. Where the set top box is integrated into and/or comprises the broadband residential gateway 300, the TV ports may be analog or compatible with HDTV signals.

[0093] The broadband residential gateway 300 need not necessarily be limited to home use and is intended to also be utilized in business applications. In some configurations, the broadband residential gateway 300 may serve the same functions and operate as a private branch exchange (PBX). Where greater capacity is desired, one or more broadband residential gateways 300 may be disposed on a PC card and combined in a PC, rack-mount, and/or server to create an expandable private branch exchange type system that enables intra-premises calling between telephones connected to various telephone connectors on the broadband residential gateway 300.

C. Integrated Broadband IP Based Communication System

[0094] Fig. 4 shows an exemplary embodiment of the broadband network 1 shown in Figs. 1-3, with like components identified with identical numbers. At the extremities of the integrated communications system is the customer premises equipment unit (CPE) 102, e.g., one or more customer premise equipment 102 at each customer location. The customer premise equipment 102 may be configured to include an integrated communication interface device such as the broadband residential gateway 300. Other customer premise equipment 102 devices such as one or more televisions (TV) 106, personal computers (PC) 108, and telephones 110, etc., may be connected to the broadband residential gateway

300 via various ports as discussed above. The customer premise equipment 102 could include multiple TVs 106, telephones 110, and PCs 108 connected to a single and/or multiple broadband residential gateway 300. Further, in certain embodiments, it may be desirable to divide the broadband residential gateway 300 into more than one physical package. In this manner, certain interface circuitry may be located outside of the home while various processing circuitry may be located near a peripheral device such as in a set top.

[0095] Where the broadband residential gateway 300 is coupled to the hybrid fiber-coaxial plant 112 in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention, it may be configured to provide the user with both information data (e.g., through an Ethernet interface), telephony access, and TV service (e.g., HDTV, Digital TV and/or CATV services). In exemplary embodiments, the hybrid fiber-coaxial plant 112 typically includes both coaxial cable and optical fiber networks, though, where desired, the network may include only coaxial cable or optical fiber. The hybrid fiber-coaxial plant 112 may be coupled to a head-end hub (HEH) 115. The head end hub 115 may provide an interconnection point to gather and/or transform external services (e.g., off air and satellite video, public switched telephone network voice, and Internet data) into a format suitable for distribution on the hybrid fiber-coaxial plant 112 for use with the customer premise equipment 102. The head-end hub 115 may include one or more cable modem termination systems (CMTS) 116 coupled between the hybrid fiber-coaxial plant 112, a Head-end (HE) 117 and/or an Edge Router (ER) 118. The edge router 118 may be coupled to the cable modem termination system 116 and to one or more ultra high speed routers (UHR) 121. One or more ultra high speed routers 121 may be interconnected to each other and/or through a centralized mechanism such as an IP network database to form a high speed network. The high speed packet network 120n is one example of the network 120 (e.g., IP network) shown in Fig. 1.

[0096] In the embodiment shown in Fig. 4, the high speed network 120n includes the ultra high-speed routers (UHR) 121 configured in a ring configuration. Although this embodiment shows the use of the IP network database (IND) 122, other configurations are also suitable. Where an IP network database 122 is utilized, it may be desirable to incorporate one or more data sets such as: a IP local number portability database (IP LNP) 122a which may be utilized for transferring local DN among service providers when a user changes their service provider; an IP caller name database (IP CNAME) 122b which may be utilized to provide a database of names relating to IP addresses and/or domain names; an IP line information database (IP LIDB) 122c which may provide alternative billing and allow flexibility in determining who pays for a call; and an IP 1-800 Database (IP 8YY) 122d which may provide a database of 1-800 numbers relating to the IP network 120a. Alterna-

tively, the IP local number portability database may be located at another location, such as at an IP central station (IP Central) 130. Where desired, a local service management system (LSMS) 150 may be arranged to provide management of the IP local number portability database. Where a local service management system 150 is utilized, a plurality of local service order administration (LSOA) units 152 may be coupled to the local service management system by, for example, a number portability administration center (NPAC) 151. In this manner, directory numbers may be transported among different service providers. In such a case, a NPAC 151 is generally coupled to the LSMS 150 and uses the LSMS 150 to synchronize the numbering databases and to coordinate the porting process.

[0097] As indicated above, the broadband network 1 may include a plurality of interconnected high performance networks 120n. Each high performance network 120n may include a separate IP central station 200 and/or share a single IP central station. Having distributed IP central stations located throughout the broadband network 1 provides improved performance and quicker response time for an individual user. Although not illustrated, each high performance network 120, 120n may be connected to multiple head-end hubs 115, each head-end hub 115 may be connected to multiple hybrid fiber-coaxial plants 112, and each hybrid fiber-coaxial plant 112 may be connected to a plurality of customer premises equipment 102, each containing one or more broadband residential gateways 300. The plurality of high performance networks 120n may be configured as an interconnected network for routing packetized information from point-to-point in accordance with a desired destination.

[0098] The high performance network 120n may be configured to provide connectivity for and between a plurality of head-end hubs 115 and/or a plurality of broadband residential gateways 300 and other networks such as the Internet, e.g., www 180, the public switched telephone network (PSTN) 160 and/or various signaling systems such as the SS7 network 170 for end-to-end voice over IP applications. The IP central station 200 may be configured to provide seamless integration and control of the high performance network 120 (e.g., an IP based communication system) interface with the public switched telephone networks (PSTN) 160, signaling system seven (SS7) 170, and/or the Internet 180 so that packetized data, voice calls, and other signaling information is properly transferred between the broadband residential gateway 300 and the public switched telephone network 160 and Internet 180. In certain configurations, the hybrid fiber-coaxial 112, head-end hub 115, and high performance network 120, provide a signal conduit for packetized voice and data which may, with the coordination of the IP central station 200, be provided in the appropriate format between the broadband residential gateway 300, the public switched telephone network 160, and/or the www 180.

D. General Operation of Integrated Communication System

[0099] The typical home user is currently required to purchase multiple intelligent data conduits such as multiple set-top boxes, a plurality of conventional, DSL and/or ISDN phones, cable modems, HDTV receivers, satellite receivers, home PC LANs, etc. The integrated communication system of the present invention provides a user friendly versatile communication system that enables voice over IP telephony, information data (e.g., PC and Internet), and television services in a system with one intelligent customer premise equipment 102 interface, the broadband residential gateway 300. The broadband residential gateway 300 in conjunction with the IP central station 200 provides a flexible communication system that can provide any number of integrated communication service features and functions without requiring the user to become familiar with numerous, diverse types of equipment.

[0100] In one exemplary application of the voice over IP operations, the broadband residential gateway 300 digitizes the analog telephony signal using, for example, G.711 μ law coding (64 Kbps Pulse Code Modulation). The digital samples may then be packetized in, for example, the broadband residential gateway 300 into IP packets. The broadband residential gateway 300 may be configured to encapsulate the IP packets into, for example, DOCSIS (Data Over Cable Service Interface Specifications) frames for transmission back to the head-end hub (HEH) 115 over the hybrid fiber-coaxial plant 112. The hybrid fiber-coaxial plant 112 may then be configured to transport signals for both upstream (to head-end hub 202) and downstream (to the broadband residential gateway 300 and customer premise equipment 102) directions. Although the DOCSIS protocol is utilized in this example, any future protocol may also be used for the digitizing and packeting of data. Where the protocol changes, it may be desirable to download new operating code from, for example, IP central station 200 to the individual broadband residential gateways 300, to update the communication protocols dynamically. When new protocols are adopted, the IP central station may utilize, for example, the system management server 216 to download new protocol data into, for example, the protocol manager in the call manager 218 and the program store 330 in the broadband residential gateway 300.

[0101] Where voice packets are sent over constant bit rate (CBR) channels using unsolicited grants, additional packet data channels may be used to support signaling messages (e.g., SGCP, Simple Gateway Control Protocol), high-speed cable modem service and/or other upstream packet data services. The upstream packet data services may be sent using available bit rate (ABR) channels such that the voice channels not impacted by data traffic.

1. TV Signal Reception

[0102] The head-end 117 may originate CATV signals for transmission over the distribution network. However, in alternate embodiments, signals may be inserted at other points in the distribution network, such as at various hubs or may arise at remote locations in the network such as IP central. Down stream channels may be utilized to facilitate the transmission of signals from the head-end or other input distribution point to the subscriber premise. Where analog RF signals arrive at the broadband residential gateway 300 of the customer premise equipment 102, typically, the transceiver circuitry 302 will detect if the signal is addressed to this broadband residential gateway 300. If so, the transceiver will allow reception of the RF signal. Upon conversion to a digital format, the signal is typically output over the high speed bus (HSB) 360 to one or more associated devices for processing. For example, where the signal is a TV signal, the signal may be output directly to the TV port 336 and/or processed by the set top box 350 prior to outputting to the TV ports 336 and/or display 338. Where user channel selection is preformed directly in the broadband residential gateway 300, channel selection may be preformed by remote control receiver 365 using an external device such as a remote control. The remote control receiver may receive a plurality of individually coded remote control commands from different receivers and process the signals for only one associated device in accordance with the received commands. Alternative channel inputs include the display 338 and/or any associated keypad. Authorization to certain channels may be controlled by security processor 340.

[0103] Where a remote set top box is utilized, the box may be coupled directly to the HFC for individual frequency tuning and/or receive a digital feed from the broadband residential gateway 300 after decoding the digital signal. For example, where hybrid fiber-coaxial plant 112 contains fiber connections to locations near the individual homes, it may be desirable to download one or more simultaneous individually requested programming stream(s) and/or digital data stream(s) to the broadband residential gateway 300. In this manner, the number of channels, movie selections, and/or entertainment options available to the user are unlimited. Cost is minimized since only a single intelligent user interface is used in the home and all televisions, phones, computers, and/or other user interface devices use the same intelligent user interface to the broadband network 1. In this manner, the broadband network 1 may offer premium television, voice and/or data services to multiple conventional televisions, phones, and PCs without the use of multiple set boxes, modems, and external connections. Thus, the users are provided a single unified interface to satisfy their external data needs.

2. Exemplary Call Flow of an On-Network Call to an Off-Network Call, with the Off-Network Call Initiating the Dropping

[0104] Fig. 5 illustrates an exemplary call processing sequence for an on-net call (e.g., an IP based call) to an off-net call (e.g., a public switched telephone network based call), in which the off-net party initiates the drop call sequence. The exemplary call processing sequence operates as follows:

1. Once the broadband residential gateway 300 detects an off hook condition, the broadband residential gateway 300 may generate an off hook signal 508 to the call manager (CM) 218. The off hook signal acts as a dial tone request to the call manager 218. Alternatively, the broadband residential gateway 300 may collect all dialed digits before activating the off hook condition. This alternative may be desirable to save resources at the call manager 218 where multiple incoming lines are available to handle any additional calls. Thus, even though one phone is off-hook, the broadband residential gateway 300 determines that other lines are available and does not initiate the off-hook signal until all dialing digits have been collected.
2. Where the call is managed entirely by the call manager, the call manager 218 will issue a dial tone message 509 to the requesting broadband residential gateway 300 in order for the broadband residential gateway 300 to generate a dial tone to the associated phone. Where the broadband residential gateway 300 shares management of the call, the broadband residential gateway 300 generates the dial tone in response to the off-hook condition.
3. Where the call is managed entirely by the call manager 218, the call manager 218 will then enter a state where it polls and collects the dialed digits 510 from the broadband residential gateway 300. The dialed digits may then be transferred to the call manager 218 one at a time as they are entered. Alternatively, where the call set-up control process is shared between the broadband residential gateway 300 and the call manager 218, the broadband residential gateway 300 collects the dial digits and transfers these, together with the off-hook signal to the call manager 218. This transfer may be facilitated by combining this data into a single data packet.
4. On receiving the dialed digits, the call manager 218 will determine whether local number portability has been enabled. Where local number portability has been enable, the call manager 218 may issue a local number portability (LNP) query 511 to the IP local number portability database 122. The IP local number portability database 122 may then supply the call manager 218 with a routing number 512 if the dialed digits form a valid sequence. Where the dialed digits do not form a valid sequence, the call

manager 218 will return an error indication to the broadband residential gateway 300. The error designation may include a tone and/or a more detailed error message for display on, for example, display 338.

5. Where the call sequence is valid, the call manager 218 may issue a first call proceeding message 513 to the broadband residential gateway 300 indicating that the number is valid and the call is proceeding (e.g., a valid on-hook condition).

6. Next, the call manager 218 typically determines whether adequate network resources are available to carry the call. In embodiments where the broadband residential gateway 300 is connected to a hybrid fiber-coaxial plant 112, the call manager 218 may send an open gate allocation request 514 to the cable modem transmission system 116. In this event, it is often desirable for the cable modem transmission system 116 to provide a gate allocation acknowledgement 515. A gate allocation acknowledgement may be utilized to verify that the necessary gate resources have been allocated.

7. The call manager 218 may send an open connection request 516 to the voice gateway (VG) 232 in order to provision the connection. Once the connection is provisioned, the VG 232 may provide an open connection acknowledgement 517 back to the call manager 218.

8. For off network connections, it is often necessary to enter a second phase of the connection process involving the appropriate link signaling to establish a call. For example, the call manager 218 may send an ISUP IAM (Initial Address) message 518 containing the directory number (DN) of the called party to the signaling gateway (SG) 234. This process is often utilized to allocate the appropriate voice trunk for communication. The call manager 218 may also send an alerting message 519 to the broadband residential gateway to produce an alerting signal, e.g., a ringing tone. The signaling gateway 234 may make the appropriate connections when the trunk has been allocated and acknowledge the request with an ISUP A call manager (Address Complete) message 520.

9. Once the called party has answered the call and connection is established, the signaling gateway 234 may send an ISUP ANM (Answered) message 521 to the call manager 218 indicating that the called party has answered.

10. The call manager 218 may then send a call start message 522 to the accounting gateway (AG) 240, indicating the start of the call. The AG 240 may use this information for billing purposes.

11. At this point, the link has been established and the conversation 523 can proceed over the communications path. Note that although signaling system 7 (SS7) signaling is used herein to illustrate the present invention and is a well known signaling pro-

ocol utilized in the art of telephony telecommunication, the instant invention is not limited to the use of signaling system 7 (SS7) signaling for call establishment of an off-network call; the use of signaling system 7 (SS7) signaling is merely illustrative. As such, other methods of signaling may be substituted for signaling system 7 (SS7).

11. When the called public switched telephone network user terminates the link, an on hook signal may be sent to the appropriate public switched telephone network switch, such as a SESS. The signaling network may then send a call termination message (not shown) to the signaling gateway 234 as notification of the call termination status.

12. The signaling gateway 234 may then generate a release 524 signal to the call manager 218.

13. Upon receipt of the release 524 signal, the call manager 218 may a) initiate the relinquishment of the provisioned network resources by issuing a close connection 525 message to the voice gateway (VG) 232 and a release complete 526 message to the signaling gateway 234, b) inform the accounting gateway that the call has been terminated, for billing purposes via, for example, sending a call end 527 message to the accounting gateway 240.

14. With reference to the close connection 525 message, the voice gateway may respond by issuing a report message 528 to the call manager 218 containing the current status of the call.

15. On receiving the call status report 528, the call manager 218 may issue a delete connection 529 message to the broadband residential gateway 300.

16. The broadband residential gateway 300 may then releases its resources and sends a status report 530 to the call manager 218. In addition to the report 530, the broadband residential gateway 300 may also send an on hook 531 status report to the call manager 218.

17. The call manager 218 may then inform the broadband residential gateway 300 to report the next off hook condition via message 532.

18. Where a cable modem transmission system is utilized, the call manager 218 may then issues a release gate 533 message to the cable modem transmission system 116 so that all the modem resources can be relinquished. Once the gate resources have been released, the cable modem transmission system 118 sends a release gate complete 534 message to the call manager 218. At this point, all resources pertaining to the call have been relinquished.

3. Exemplary Call Flow of an On-Network Call to another On-Network User, Under One Call Manager Control

[0105] Fig. 6 illustrates an exemplary call flow of an

on-network call to another on-network user, with the call being handled by a single call manager (CM) 218. In alternate embodiments, different portions of the call set-up sequence may be handled by more than one call manager 218 in the IP network 120. The exemplary "on-network" call processing sequence operates as follows:

1. Once the broadband residential gateway 300A detects an off hook condition of, for example, a telephone, the broadband residential gateway 300A may generate an off hook signal 607 to the call manager (CM) 218. The off hook signal may act as a dial tone request to the call manager 218.

2. The call manager 218 may then issue a dial tone message 608 to the requesting near-side broadband residential gateway 300A in order for the broadband residential gateway 300A to generate a dial tone.

3. The call manager 218 may then enter a state where it polls and collects the dialed digits 609 from broadband residential gateway 300A. The dialed digits are transferred to the call manager 218 one at a time. In a similar fashion to the subject matter discussed above, in embodiments where the call setup is shared between the call manager 218 and the broadband residential gateway 300A, the broadband residential gateway may manage the call set-up and transfer both the off-hook signal and the dialed digits to the call manager 218 within one or more.

4. On receiving the completed dialed digits, the call manager 218 may issue a local number portability query 610 to the IP local number portability database 122. The IP local number portability database 122 may then supply the call manager 218 with a routing number 611 if the dialed digits constitute a valid sequence.

5. The call manager 218 may then ensure that adequate network resources are available to accommodate the call.

6. Where adequate resources are available, the call manager 218 may issue a first setup message 612 to whatever mechanism couples the far side broadband residential gateway 300, e.g., the cable modem transmission system 116B, to allocate transmission resources on the far side.

7. A call proceeding message and a report on hook condition message 613 may then be sent to the broadband residential gateway 300A.

8. A gate allocation message 614 may then be sent from the call manager 218 to the cable modem transmission system 116A, where the broadband residential gateway 300A is coupled via a cable modem transmission system. In this environment, a gate allocation 614 message may be utilized to set up the relevant modem resources.

9. Where a cable modem transmission system is utilized and receives the setup message 612 from

call manager 218, the cable modem transmission system 116B may then send a connection request 615 message to the far side broadband residential gateway 300B.

10. Where a cable modem transmission system 116B is utilized, the cable modem transmission system may then send a setup acknowledgement 616 to call manager 218. Once the resources are allocated by the cable modem transmission system 116A, the cable modem transmission system may then send a gate allocation acknowledgement message 617 back to the call manager 218.

11. Once the call manager 218 receives the setup acknowledgement 616 along with the gate allocation acknowledgement message 617, the far-side broadband residential gateway 300B may then send a ringing message 618 to the far-side cable modem transmission system 116B where this connectivity is utilized.

12. In these embodiments, the far-side cable modem transmission system 116B may then issue an alerting message 619 to the call manager 218.

13. The call manager 218 may then convey the alert via an alerting message 620 to the broadband residential gateway 300A, to produce a indicating signal such as a ringing signal indicating that the call is going through.

14. The cable modem transmission system 116B may then issue a connect message 622 to the call manager 218 in response to the far-side broadband residential gateway 300B sending an off hook message 621 to the far-side cable modem transmission system 116B. At this point, the end-to-end communication path is established and conversation 623 can be facilitated.

15. Assuming that the calling party hangs up first, the broadband residential gateway 300A may initiate an on hook sequence 624 message which may be communicated to the near-side cable modem transmission system 116A.

16. The cable modem transmission system 116A may then issue a disconnect message 625 to the call manager (CM) 218. The call manager 218 may then issue a first delete connection request 626 to the near-side broadband residential gateway 300A and then a second delete connection request 627 to the far-side broadband residential gateway 300B.

17. The near-side broadband residential gateway 300A may respond to the call manager 218 with a report message 628 containing the connection status, as well as an on hook message 630 to verify that the calling party at near-side broadband residential gateway 300A has terminated the call.

18. The far-side broadband residential gateway 300B may respond to the call manager 218 with a report message 629 containing the connection status, as well as an on hook message 631 indicating that the called party connection has now been ter-

minated.

19. At this point, the call manager 218 may issue release gate messages 634 and 635 to the near-side cable modem transmission system 218 and far side cable modem transmission system 116B, respectively, so as to release the modems associated with the call. Once all the resources have releases, the cable modem transmission system 116A and the cable modem transmission system 116B may issue gate release complete messages 636 and 637 respectively to the call manager 218.

20. For simplicity, the accounting processing is not shown. However, the process used in Fig. 5 may be utilized as the billing procedure for on-net calls. Such a process might constitute sending a call start message from the call manager 218 to an accounting gateway (AG) 240 after the connect message 622 is sent from the far-side cable modem transmission system 116B to call manager 218. The call start message would trigger the start of the billing procedure. A corresponding call end message would then be sent from the call manager 218 to the AG 240 after the near-side cable modem transmission system 116A sends a the disconnect message 625 to the call manager 218. This call end message would trigger the ending of the billing procedure for that call.

[0106] Although the IP voice packets for these calls are typically routed over the IP network 120, the system may, where appropriate, route IP voice packets over the Internet 180.

II. Multimedia Messaging Service

[0107] The present invention further provides for a multimedia messaging service which may be used in the aforementioned, facilities-based, end-to-end broadband communication network infrastructure that may include integrated telephone, television and data network communications. The broadband network multimedia messaging service provides an any-media messaging service to the broadband communication network subscriber (user). The broadband communication network subscriber may send and receive messages in a variety of formats such as e-mail (text), voice mail (audio), or multimedia video mail (audio and video). The system may provide for storage of sent and received messages, message waiting notification capabilities which may be programmed by the user, user programmable message media type conversion, message sorting and prioritizing, and user programmable location for message storage and archive.

[0108] The broadband network 1 components most involved in the multimedia messaging service may include the multimedia server (MS) 222, the call manager (CM) 218, the announcement server, and the broadband residential gateway (BRG) 300. The multimedia

server 222 may be configured as the primary storage and intelligence center to support e-mail (e.g., html) messages, voice mail (audio) messages, and/or video mail (audio and video) messages. The multimedia messages may include standard pre-configured system messages and/or user defined messages instructing callers to leave a message. In any event, where the messages are stored in a centralized location, the multimedia server may provide such storage. On the other hand, the BRG's 300 memory 322, a PC connected to the BRG's 300 data port 334, or a disk drive connected to the BRG's 300 peripheral port 342, may provide such storage. In either case, a database may be utilized for indexing, storage, and retrieval of such messages. In exemplary systems, the user may access predetermined ones of these messages. The CM 218 may direct incoming calls AS 220 after a predetermined number of rings and the AS 220 will provide a message to the caller indicating to leave a message. The CM may then direct the message left by the caller to the MS 222.

[0109] In one embodiment, the Multimedia Server (MS) 222 provides support for multimedia messaging service for the integrated communication system. MS 222 may provide the overall management of mail messages received in e-mail (text), voice mail (audio) or video mail (audio and video) format. The mail messages may be indexed in a database for retrieval based on user input. The multimedia server may use IP as the preferred method of communication.

[0110] Referring now to figures 7A and 7B, an exemplary process for the multimedia messaging service storing messages and providing notification to the broadband network subscriber is provided. First, at step 701 a party calls the broadband network subscriber and the CM 218 directs the call to the called parties BRG 300. Next, at decision step 702, the CM 218 determines if the called party has indicated that incoming calls be forwarded to the message box immediately rather than alerting the called party. If not, then at decision step 703, the system awaits the called party's answer. If the called party answers the call the CM 218 may set up the call at step 704. If the called party has indicated that the call is to be directed immediately to the message box, then the system proceeds to step 705. Further, if the called party does not answer the system proceeds to step 705. At step 705, the system may, for example, query the announcement server (AS) 220 of the multimedia server (MS) 222, to determine if the called party has a pre-recorded personal message. This message may be unique for a particular calling party (e.g., boss) or class of calling party (e.g., friends, family, etc.). If the called party does not have a personal pre-recorded message then the system plays the system default message at step 706 indicating that the caller may leave a message of any media type and indicate a priority, then proceeds to step 712 for storing the message according to, for example, media type and priority. If the called party does have a pre-recorded personalized message the system

(e.g., the CM 218) proceeds to decision step 707 to detect the type of equipment being used by the calling party and the bandwidth available to playback the pre-recorded message. If the system can not detect the calling party's equipment type, then it plays the system default message at step 706 which is stored in, for example, the AS 220 or the MS 222. Otherwise, the system proceeds to step 708 and plays back the called party's pre-recorded message stored in, for example AS 220 or the MS 222, to the calling party. In any case, the call manager CM 218 directs the call to, for example, the announcement server 220 or the multimedia server 222, which plays a message indicating that the calling party may leave a message using whatever type of media (e.g., email, voice mail, video mail) and indicate a priority for the message, as indicated at steps 706 and 708.

[0111] Then, if a personalized pre-recorded message is played back at step 708, at decision step 709 the system (e.g., CM 218) determines if the called party has set a no message allowed status for the calling party. This may apply to all callers or to particular callers as pre-programmed by the called party. If the called party has set a no message option, then the call is disconnected at step 710. Next, at step 711, the calling party may generate a voice mail, text message, or video mail. This message creation may occur in any of a number of servers such as the CM 218, AS 220, or MS 222. If not already at the multimedia server 222, the CM 218 may direct the call to the multimedia server 222, where the message is stored according to the media type, e.g., text, audio, or audio and video along with a priority indicator, as shown in step 712. Next, at step 713, the called party may be provided a notification that a message is waiting by, for example, the multimedia server 222 sending a message to the called party's BRG 300.

[0112] As indicated in step 714, alternatively a party may send a broadband network subscriber a message without calling the subscriber, by sending an email, voice mail, or video mail message that was pre-recorded by the party by sending it to, for example, the subscribers email address, IP address, or DN. The pre-recorded message may contain an indicator that it is a message so that the CM 218 does not attempt to set up a call but instead directs the message directly to, for example, the multimedia server 222 or the BRG 300.

[0113] Referring now to Figure 8A, an exemplary process for the multimedia messaging service notification to the broadband network subscriber that a message(s) is waiting. First, at step 801, the broadband customer premise equipment (CPE) intelligent transceiver, for example BRG 300, receives notification of a message(s) waiting. Next, at decision step 802, a determination is made as to whether the CPE intelligent transceiver, for example the BRG 300, includes means for immediately alerting the subscriber that a message is waiting, for example, the BRG 300 has an active display, an active message waiting indicator light, and/or an active intercom with speaker. If so, at step 803, a message

waiting notification is sent to the active device (e.g., display, indicator light, intercom) indicating, for example, that there is a message waiting, the media type of the message, the number of messages waiting, who sent the message(s), etc. Since the system has multimedia message capability, the message waiting notification may include, for example, a graphic displaying a picture of the person who left the message or a logo of the company leaving the message (for example if the message is a solicitation). Next, the process would continue by awaiting the broadband network subscriber's request to receive his message(s) (see Fig. 8B at step 815). If there is not an active device associated with the CPE intelligent transceiver so that a message waiting notification alert can be provided immediately, the process awaits the subscriber to turn on one of the CPE which will allow a notification to be provided (see Fig. 8B at step 811).

[0114] Referring now to Fig. 8B, an exemplary process for the multimedia messaging service notification of message waiting and subscriber access of message log is provided. At step 811, the broadband communication system (BCS) subscriber turns on one of the customer premises equipment (other than the BRG 300), for example the TV 106 or PC 108, or the subscriber picks up a telephone 110 head set. Then, for example, the BRG 300 determines whether a message is waiting for review by the subscriber(s) at step 812. This determination may be made by, for example, the BRG 300 accessing a message waiting file stored in its own memory 322, or requesting message waiting status from the multimedia server 222. In any case, if there is no message waiting for the BCS subscriber(s), then the BRG 300 may continue to periodically determine if a message is waiting. In the case when a message is waiting for the BCS subscriber, the BRG 300 may determine whether the TV 106 or PC 108 are turned on at step 813. If the TV 106 and/or PC 108 is turned on then the BRG 300 may send a message waiting notification to the TV 106 and/or PC 108 indicating the message media type and the number of messages waiting by using, for example, a message board on the display of the TV 106 and/or PC 108 (see Figs. 9 and 10) or provide a voice synthesis message generated by the voice recognition and voice synthesis 355 of the BRG 300 or MS 222.

[0115] On the other hand, if the TV or PC is not on, the BRG 300 may determine if one of the telephones 110 is off hook at decision step 816. If there is not a telephone 110 off hook, then the BRG 300 may continue to monitor whether there are any messages waiting and provide alerting via its own display 338, indicator light, and/or intercom 344. However, if there is a telephone 110 off hook, the BRG 300 may send an audio message waiting alert to the telephone indicating, for example, that a message is waiting for which subscriber, what type of media the message is in, and how many messages of which type of media are available. The BRG 300 and MS 222 may allow the BCS subscriber to access any media type messages in audio format with the

telephone by using, for example, pattern recognition and voice synthesis if needed.

[0116] Next, at decision step 815, the broadband network determines whether the BCS subscriber has requested review of the messages waiting. This determination may be made by, for example, the BRG 300 or the MS 222. If the subscriber has not requested review of pending messages the system returns to step 812 and periodically updates a message waiting status log. If the BCS subscriber requests review of waiting messages, the system, for example the BRG 300 or MS 222, may request that the subscriber enter their login identity and a password at step 818. Then, at step 819, the system checks to make sure the login ID and password entered are correct for the access to the message(s) waiting. If the login ID and password are not correct after a number of tries by the subscriber, the system, for example the BRG 300 or MS 222, will return to step 812 and determine if a message is waiting. On the other hand, if the login ID and password are correct, then at step 820 the system provides the user a log of their messages in the appropriate format and media type according to the type of device they are operating; TV 106, PC 108, and telephone 110. The log of messages may include both new and old messages, as well as messages sent by the subscriber to others, and the log may be generated by either the BRG 300 and/or MS 222 and copies of the messages may be maintained in memory, in for example the BRG 300 and/or MS 222.

[0117] Referring now to Fig. 8C, an exemplary process for the multimedia messaging service message retrieval and archive is provided. To retrieve a message waiting which is presented in a message log provided at step 820, the subscriber may, for example, click on the message identifier. Then, at step 831, the system, for example the BRG 300 or MS 222, determines that the subscriber has selected a message (new or old) to review. Then at step 833 the system, for example the BRG 300 or MS 222, determines if the subscriber has designated a particular media type for reviewing messages (see Figs. 11 and 12). This media type selection for reviewing the message(s) may be provided actively by preprogramming or passively by selection of a particular type of CPE, for example the telephone 110 or a PC 108 without multimedia capabilities. Further, the media type selection may be performed real time while the subscriber is retrieving his messages. Then, if the subscriber has selected a particular type of media to review his messages and that type is supported by the CPE device he is using, then the system, for example, the BRG 300 or the MS 222, will convert the message to the particular media type selected by the subscriber (if not already in the desired media type), at step 835. This conversion may be done in advance or in real time. If there is no particular media type selected by the subscriber or required by the CPE being used (e.g., telephone), then at step 834 the system, for example the BRG 300 or the MS 222, presents the message to the subscriber

using the media type by which the message was originated and/or stored. Alternatively, the BRG 300 may send a system message to the MS 222 indicating the type of CPE 102 that is currently active and been used to review the message waiting. The MS 222 may choose an appropriate playback device, e.g., voice synthesis for text-to-voice conversion or voice recognition for voice-to-text conversion, according to the type of CPE 102 being used by the subscriber to review the message waiting. Further, the MS 222 may use different coding/decoding techniques according to the detected bandwidth to deliver the mail message along the path that is available. If the subscriber has a service level agreement (SLA) with the service provider for a guaranteed bandwidth, the MS 222 may try to reserve a bandwidth with the broadband communication system (or portions thereof) if the user requires higher bandwidth such as for reviewing a multimedia video and audio message waiting.

[0118] In any case, next at step 836 the system determines if the message selected by the subscriber is to be archived. If the message is to be archived, the system, for example the BRG 300 or MS 222, may store the message in, for example, a central storage, a subscriber CPE 102 (e.g., BRG 300, PC 108), and/or any other subscriber designated storage device, at step 837. The system may also retain the message in memory for a predetermined amount of time according to a system default period of time or a subscriber defined period of time, e.g., 10 days, after the message has been reviewed. In either case, the system returns to step 831 to await for the subscriber to select a message. If the subscriber does not select a message to review the system at decision step 832 determines if the subscriber has requested to end message retrieval. If so, the system returns to step 802 and continues to provide message waiting notification to the subscriber in accordance with messages waiting to be reviewed. Otherwise, the system will continue to provide the message log information.

[0119] As illustrated in Figs. 9 and 10, a Graphical User Interface (GUI) may be provided on a display 901, for example, as one means for notifying a user that a message is waiting and enabling the user to retrieving and store messages. The GUI provides the user with a single means for identifying and accessing all the various media types of mail messages which are stored and awaiting review; whether the mail message is in e-mail, voice-mail, or multimedia video mail format. The GUIs of Figs. 9 and 10 may be used on any display, for example, the display of a TV 106, the display of a PC 108, and/or the display 338 of the BRG 300. In any case, as shown in Fig. 9, a scrolling or stationary message board 901 may be provided to indicate to the subscriber that a message is waiting for review. The subscriber to whom the messages waiting a redirected is identified by, for example, their particular directory number, illustrated as DN1 903. However, the subscriber notification could be a name or

an image, e.g., picture or the subscriber. The message board may also provide an indicator showing the type of media of the messages waiting, e.g., envelop 904 for text messages (or a speaker for audio messages and a video recorder for multimedia messages) and the number of messages in a particular type of media.

[0120] In one embodiment in which the GUI of Fig. 9 is displayed on, for example a TV 106, message waiting notification and message retrieval may operate as follows. First, while the subscriber is watching TV 106 the message board 902 would appear in one area of the display 901, for example, the bottom of the display. Alerting the subscriber of the arrival of a new message waiting may be provided by an audible sound or flashing of an image on the display. If the message is not retrieved, the message board and/or alerting may be activated intermittently. The subscriber may then retrieve the message(s) by using either the TV 106 if the TV 106 is equipped with an input device such as a keypad, microphone with voice recognition, infrared remote control, etc. Otherwise, the subscriber may retrieve the message(s) using a PC 108, telephone 110, or the BRG 300 if the BRG is equipped with a display 338 and/or intercom module 344. Once the subscriber has indicated they wish to retrieve a message waiting, the system, for example the BRG 300 or MS 222, will prompt the subscriber for a subscriber identification, for example a directory number (DN) or a name, and a password associated with the subscriber identity. An example of such a prompt as provided via display 901 is shown in Fig. 10, Message Console Login Window 1002. In response, the system provides the subscriber a message log which identifies the messages in the subscribers mail box. Once the message(s) has been read the message board 902 will disappear until a new message arrives.

[0121] In another embodiment in which the GUI of Fig. 10 is displayed on, for example a PC 108, message waiting notification and message retrieval may operate as follows. The subscriber turns on the PC and may be either prompted by message board 902 that a message is waiting to which the subscriber responds by selecting on a particular icon, or may select an icon representative of the subscriber's mail box. In any case, the subscriber may be presented with Message Console Login Window 1002 and/or Notification Window 1001. The subscriber then enters a subscriber identification (e.g., DN or name) and password. In response the system, if it has not already, may provide the Notification Window 1001 indicating the media type and number of new messages waiting is presented on display 901. Upon selecting one of the media types (or all types), the system provides the subscriber a message log which identifies the message(s) of that media type in the subscribers mail box. The subscriber can then retrieve the message(s) of their selecting.

[0122] In a still further embodiment the GUIs of Figs. 9 and 10 may be used with the display 338 of the BRG

300. In this case, a user may touch an icon on message board 902 or notification window 1001, representing a pending email, voicemail and/or multimedia mail message. The panel may send an electronic signal to the processing controller 306 and/or an attached processor such as the telephony processor P1 308. On receiving the signal, the P1 telephony processor 308 may generate an IP packet via the transceiver 302 across portions of the broadband network 1 to the multimedia server 222 in IP central station 200. The multimedia server 222 may authenticate the request by, for example, verifying location of the request and/or the identity and password of the requesting party. Where identity of the calling party is being verified, the user may enter an access password by an audio and/or keyboard request. Where an audio request is generated, the user may utilize the external / internal intercom module 344 of the broadband residential gateway 300, or via a text message entered into the display 338. The user may then enter the appropriate subscriber identity and password via the on-screen soft keypad, microphone, and/or keyboard.

[0123] Alternatively, if the message is stored locally in the broadband residential gateways 300 memory 322 and there is not a password lock on the broadband residential gateway 300, the user may not have to enter a password to access the message. Where the message is stored locally in the broadband residential gateways 300 memory 322 rather than IP central station, the display 338, telephone 110, TV 106, or PC 108 may simply recall the message from memory 322 and presents to the user to provide one-touch instant message retrieval. In embodiments where the broadband residential gateway 300 supports multiple mailboxes, the icons on the display 901 may be personalized to show the identity of the owner of the message. Each user may have a different password to ensure privacy of access.

[0124] Further, as indicated above, the system of the present invention may provide the user control of the type of media by which the stored mail messages are to be retrieved and reviewed, regardless of the type of media used to create and store the message. For example, if a user has an e-mail message the subscriber may instruct the IP network multimedia message service to transform the text of the e-mail message into an audio message using, for example, pattern recognition and voice synthesis. Similarly, if a user has an audio voice-mail message the system may transform the audio into a text (e-mail) message using voice recognition. If there is no subscriber choice designated the MS 222 may automatically detect the CPE 102 type being used by the subscriber to receive the message waiting.

[0125] Referring to Figures 11 and 12, one method for converting media type is provided for the multimedia messaging service. First, at step 1101 the broadband communication system subscriber may request to designate a media type for reviewing their message(s). This request may occur at a time prior to receipt and review of the message(s) or in real time when the subscriber

wishes to retrieve and review the message. In either case, the subscriber inputs to the system which type of media they desire to review their messages. For example, the subscriber may be planning to be traveling and will only be able to access the system via a cellular telephone. Thus, the subscriber may preprogram the broadband network multimedia messaging service to convert all his messages into audio so that he can listen to them with the audio portion of his cellular telephone. Or, the auto detection feature may result in message media type conversion.

[0126] To achieve pre-programming of the system to converting various messages to other desired formats a message type conversion menu may be provided using, for example, a GUI similar to the one illustrated in Figure 12. The message type conversion window GUI may include a "From" field 1201, a "To" field 1202, and a "Status" field 1204. The "To" field 1201 and the "From" field 1202 contain an audio indicator 1204, text indicator 1205, video indicator 1206, and an "All" indicator, so that the subscriber can select to convert any combination of message types to any combination of message types. In the example provide above, when the subscriber wants to receive all his messages in audio format, they may select the "ALL" indicator 1207 in the From field 1201 and the audio indicator 1204 in the To field 1202 so that the Status field 1203 would indicate conversion of message media type from text 1205 and video 1206 to audio 1204 (not shown). Pre-programming of the message type conversion feature may also be achieved using a telephone by the system providing voice prompts (e.g., voice synthesis) and the subscriber inputting their selection via the telephone keypad and/or voice responsive voice recognition.

[0127] Then, using the pre-programmed information or media type selection information provide in real time at step 1102, for example the multimedia server 222 or the BRG 300 determines that the subscriber has selected converting message(s) to, for example audio, the multimedia server 222 or the BRG 300 may convert all video messages to audio messages by stripping of the audio portion and convert text messages (e.g., email) to audio using, for example, pattern recognition and voice synthesis at step 1104. Alternatively, if message(s) are to be converted to text messages, the system would convert voice mail messages and audio portions of multimedia messages to text using, for example, voice recognition at step 1103. Such a conversion may be particularly useful if the subscriber is planning a trip and only has, for example, a palm pilot, hand held PC, or personal digital assistant (PDA), without audio capabilities to take along on the trip, and thus may preprogram the system to convert all his messages to a text format.

[0128] Further, if messages are to be converted to multimedia type messages the system will first determine whether the subscriber has selected a video image to be presented with the message converted to audio at step 1105. For example, the subscriber might select an

animated figure image having a mouth to which the audio message will be added. Alternatively, the image could be a still figure of the person who left the message with a moving mouth morphed over the still picture where the morphed mouth varies in a coordinated manner with the message converted to audio. If the subscriber has not selected a video image to combine with the message converted to audio, then the system will provide a system default image (e.g., a still figure or video clip) at step 1106. In either case, at step 1107, the system, for example the multimedia server 222 of the BRG 300, may convert text of an email message to audio using for example pattern recognition and voice synthesis or use the voice from a voice mail message and morph movement of the mouth on the image to synchronize with the voice. Such an approach to converting text and audio messages to multimedia messages may provide entertainment or improved communication to the subscriber. In any case, the process may continue by returning to step 835 so as to provide the converted message(s) to the subscriber.

[0129] The multimedia messaging service of the present invention may also enable a user to sort and/or prioritize mail messages based on a variety of user specified criteria such as the senders identity, subject matter, date sent, priority specified by the sender, category, custom sort (e.g., a "hotword/phrase" in the message body or title), etc. Figure 13 illustrates one example of a GUI that may be used in the present invention for sorting and prioritizing a subscriber's mail. As indicated, by selecting the "Sort By" icon 1301 a list of categories may be provided by which the subscriber may select to sort mail messages. Some exemplary categories are the name of the sender, the sender's address or directory number, the subject matter of the message (e.g., business, weather, etc.), the date the message was received, the priority specified by the sender, and a custom feature which allows the subscriber to define the sort category. The message sort and prioritize window may also include a filter 1302 for setting whether the category is sorted using ascending or descending alphanumerical order, or a custom manner defined by the subscriber. Section 1303 illustrates a message log that may be used in reviewing the sort and prioritize status and/or creating a custom sort and/or filter.

[0130] Referring to Figures 14 and 15, the multimedia messaging service may further include a multimedia message forwarding feature which enables the subscriber to specify a remote location to which message waiting notification will be automatically forward and from which the subscriber may instantaneously review the message in whatever media the subscriber selects. Figure 14 provides one exemplary method for providing remote message notification in the broadband network 1 of the present invention. After the broadband customer premise intelligent transceiver (e.g., BRG 300) receives notification that a message is waiting (step 801), at step 1401, the system, for example the BRG 300 or the MS

222, checks to see if the subscriber has designated a remote location to forward his message notification. If not, the system returns to the previously described notification process which provides notification at the subscriber's system designated location (e.g., at the subscriber's home or office). However, if the subscriber has designated a remote location for message notification, the system, for example the BRG 300 or the MS 222 and the call manager 218 forward a message notification to the remote location designated by the subscriber at step 1402. For example, the subscriber may forward their message notification to their cellular phone when they are commuting to and from work or traveling on business. Then, at decision step 1403, the system determines if the subscriber requested review of messages waiting at the remote location. If so, then the system provides the message log of message(s) waiting to the subscriber at the remote location at step 1404. For example, if the system knows that the forward-to DN is a cellular telephone having only audio capabilities then the system, for example the BRG 300 or the MS 222, will forward the message log in audio form and convert to audio and forward all the messages the subscriber request to review from the remote location. The system will then return to the normal message notification process.

[0131] Referring to Figure 15, an exemplary graphical user interface (GUI) for entering information into the broadband network system for designating message notification location which may be displayed on, for example, a TV 106, a PC 108 or display 338 of a BRG 300, is provided. This GUI may be used for establishing where within the subscriber's CPE the message waiting notification will be provided and designate if and where a remote message waiting notification will be provided. The message notification location designation screen may be provided to each subscriber account or DN. The message notification location designation screen includes a Device 1501 designation for designating where on the customer (subscriber) premises a notification is to be provided and what, if any remote location may receive a message waiting notification. Further, the message notification location designation screen may indicate where the particular device by which notification is provided is physically located. The message notification location designation screen may also include a status icon or button 1503 that may be switched between on and off to activate or deactivate message waiting notification at the various selected customer premises and remote locations. The message notification location designation screen may include an information input line 1504 which allows the subscriber to identify the remote location by entering, for example, a directory number, internet protocol system address, email address, etc.

[0132] In addition, the multimedia messaging service may enable the user to store the messages at various locations such as on their own equipment, e.g., within a PC or a BRG, or to archive the message within the sys-

tem (possibly for a fee). If system storage is chosen, a status report may be provided for space used, available space, and charges for the use of storage. If more space is needed, increases may be requested by the subscriber in real time and billed to the subscriber accordingly. Alternatively, the storage could be purchased from any number of providers in real time on line similar to a commodity purchase. Referring to Figure 16, an exemplary graphical user interface (GUI) for entering information into the broadband network system for designating message storage is provided. This GUI may contain two logical groups of information input: standard message storage section 1601 (e.g., short term) and archive storage section 1610 (e.g., long term storage). The subscriber may, for example, select a message storage device and location 1602 and a storage duration 1603 for standard message storage 1601. The subscriber may select one status for main standard storage and one status for backup standard storage. The standard storage may be provided locally in, for example, the memory 322 of BRG 300, a PC 108, or a peripheral storage device such as a disk drive or digital video disk (DVD). Alternatively, the standard storage may be at a remote location such as an IP Central Station 200 central storage device. The latter is particularly attractive for when the BRG 300 is used as a PBX in a business location. Further, the system may provide an activity log which tracks past and present messages and/or archived multimedia messages which may be presented on display 901. The log may keep track of what, who, where, when the message is retrieved.

[0133] The archive storage 1610 may provide the subscriber the ability to designate the message storage device and location 1611, the storage duration 1612, and the storage trigger 1613 (i.e., how a message is designated for archive). The archive messages may be stored locally in for example the memory 322 of the BRG 300, or at a remote location such as a memory associated with the multimedia server 222 of the IP central 200. The archive may be utilized by the subscriber to recall messages which have long since been erased from local storage but may be retrieved from IP central station 200 on tape and/or disk storage.

[0134] The multimedia messaging service may also be equipped with a simple user friendly message waiting indicator light, located on for example the BRG 300, for each IP address, and a one touch multimedia messaging service message retrieval feature activation which may be provide via a display 901 or keypad input.

[0135] Thus, the present invention provides integrated multimedia networks, which may include voice over IP (VoIP), with a user friendly flexible multimedia messaging service that integrates all types of mail messages so that a user can be notified, identify, retrieve, and store all his mail messages with a single service in whatever media the user wishes.

[0136] Although particular embodiments of the present invention have been shown and described, it will

be understood that it is not intended to limit the invention to the preferred embodiments and it will be obvious to those skilled in the art that various changes and modifications may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention. Thus, the invention is intended to cover alternatives, modifications, and equivalents, which may be included within the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the claims. For example, the subscriber input for programming the various feature/functions of the multimedia messaging service may be provided using a keypad and automated voice prompts rather than graphical user interfaces and could be programmed from a remote location or by a system manager. Further, the multimedia messaging service could be provided with various default settings by the system management server 216 of the multimedia server 222.

[0137] Where technical features mentioned in any claim are followed by reference signs, those reference signs have been included for the sole purpose of increasing the intelligibility of the claims and accordingly, such reference signs do not have any limiting effect on the scope of each element identified by way of example by such reference signs.

Claims

1. A method for providing multimedia messaging service in an integrated broadband communication system, comprising the steps of:

receiving a message of any media type directed to a subscriber of said system;
storing a message according to its media type being one of text, audio, and multimedia audio and video; and
providing a message waiting notification to said subscriber at one or more predetermined locations, said message waiting notification identifying said type of said message waiting as one of said text, said audio, and said multimedia audio and video.

2. The method according to claim 1, characterised in that said step of providing a message waiting notification is directed to equipment located at said subscriber's premises.

3. The method according to claim 2, characterised in that directing a message waiting notification to said customers premises equipment is provided by a multimedia server, said one of said customer premises is an intelligent transceiver, and said subscriber determines which equipment at said subscriber's premises is to provide alerting to said subscriber based on said message waiting notification.

4. The method according to claim 3, characterised in that said message received is created by a sending party and contains an indication of media type so that it may be stored according to said media type being one of text, audio, and multimedia audio and video. 5
5. The method according to claim 4, characterised in that said message received is created in real time on a multimedia server by a calling party unable to reach said subscriber. 10
6. The method according to claim 5, further comprising the step of:
displaying said message waiting notification on a display. 15
7. The method according to claim 6, characterised in that said display is: 20
 - a display of said intelligent transceiver at said customer premises if said intelligent transceiver has an active display;
 - a display of a personal computer at said customer premises if said personal computer is turned on; 25
 - a display of a television at said customer premises if said television is turned on.
8. The method according to claim 5, further comprising the step of:
providing an audio message notification to a telephone if said telephone headset is off hook. 30
9. The method according to claim 6, further comprising the step of:
requesting said subscriber's identification and password to give said subscriber a message log of said messages waiting. 35
10. The method according to claim 9, further comprising the step of:
converting at least one of said messages waiting from a first media type to a second media type if said subscriber has designated a preferred media type for reviewing said messages waiting. 40
11. The method according to claim 10, characterised in that said message waiting is converted from text to multimedia audio and video using voice synthesis and animation so that the animated figure is synchronised to the to voice synthesised speech. 45
12. The method according to claim 11, further comprising the steps of:
archiving at least one of said messages waiting at a subscriber designated location if said subscriber has designated the message is to be archived. 50
13. The method according to claim 1, characterised in that said step of providing a message waiting notification is directed to equipment located remote from said subscriber's premises and is predetermined by said subscriber. 5
14. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
receiving a call from a calling party directed to said system subscriber; and prompting said calling party indicating that said message may be created and left for said subscriber using any media type. 10
15. A method for providing multimedia messaging service in an integrated broadband communication system, comprising the steps of:
converting at least one message from a first media type to a second media type for reviewing messages. 15
16. The method according to claim 15, further comprising the step of:
providing a graphical user interface so that said system user can preprogram said system to convert messages from said first media type to said second media type and to sort incoming messages in a message log so as to appear in a predetermined order according to at least one desired category. 20
17. A system providing multimedia messaging service in an integrated broadband communication-system, including: 30
 - a multimedia server providing storage of messages of all media types such as text, audio, and multimedia audio and video which are received for a system subscriber; and
 - an intelligent transceiver located to said system subscriber's premises and operative to receive a message waiting notification from said multimedia server and alert said subscriber of a message awaiting their review, said alert including an indication of said media type of said message being text, audio, and multimedia audio and video. 35
18. The system according to claim 17, characterised in that said alert is provided on a display of: 40
 - a television coupled to said intelligent transceiver;
 - a personal computer coupled to said intelligent transceiver. 45
19. The system according to claim 18, characterised in that said intelligent transceiver is a broadband residential gateway with at least one of: 50

a display that provides said alert;
an audible alert.

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FIG. 1

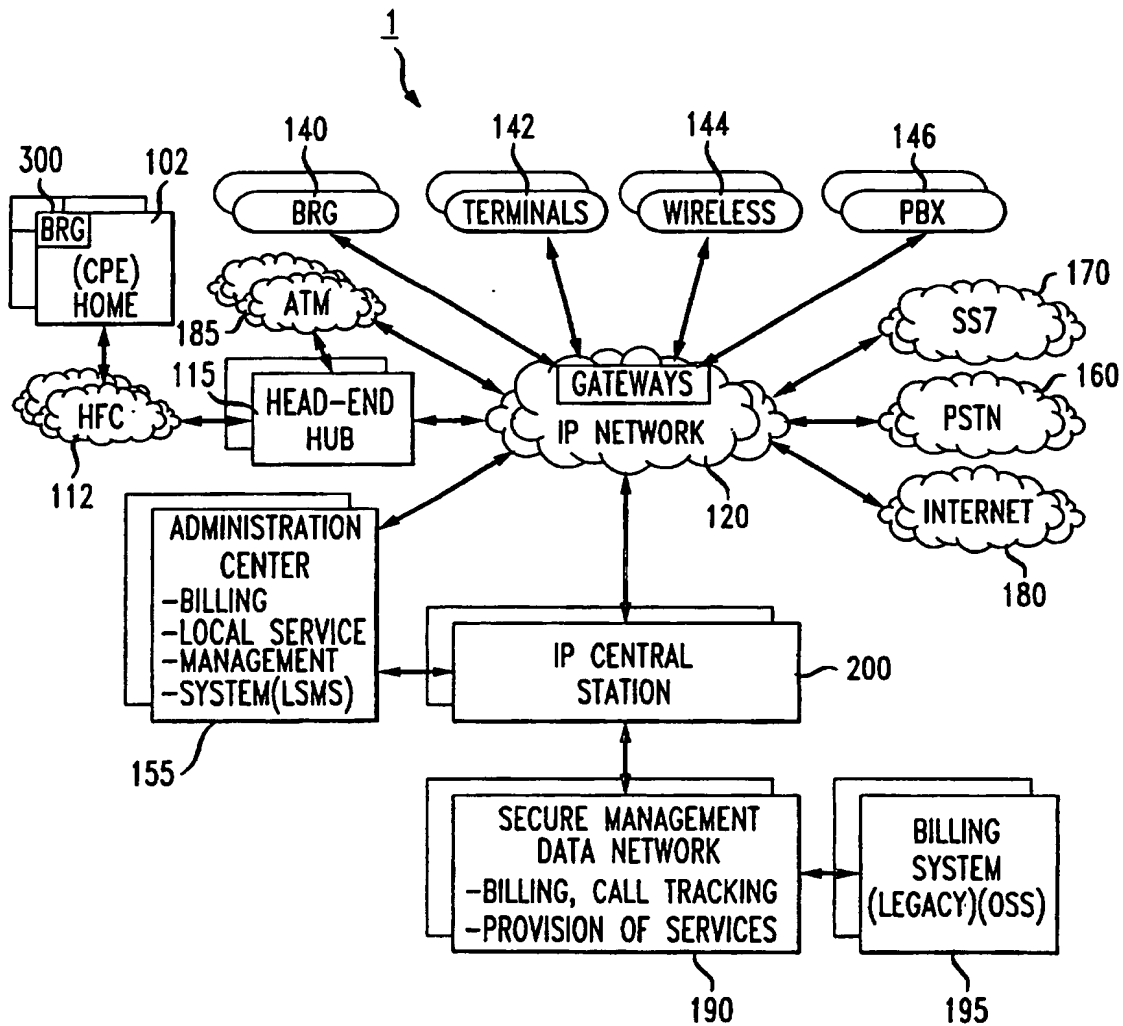


FIG. 2

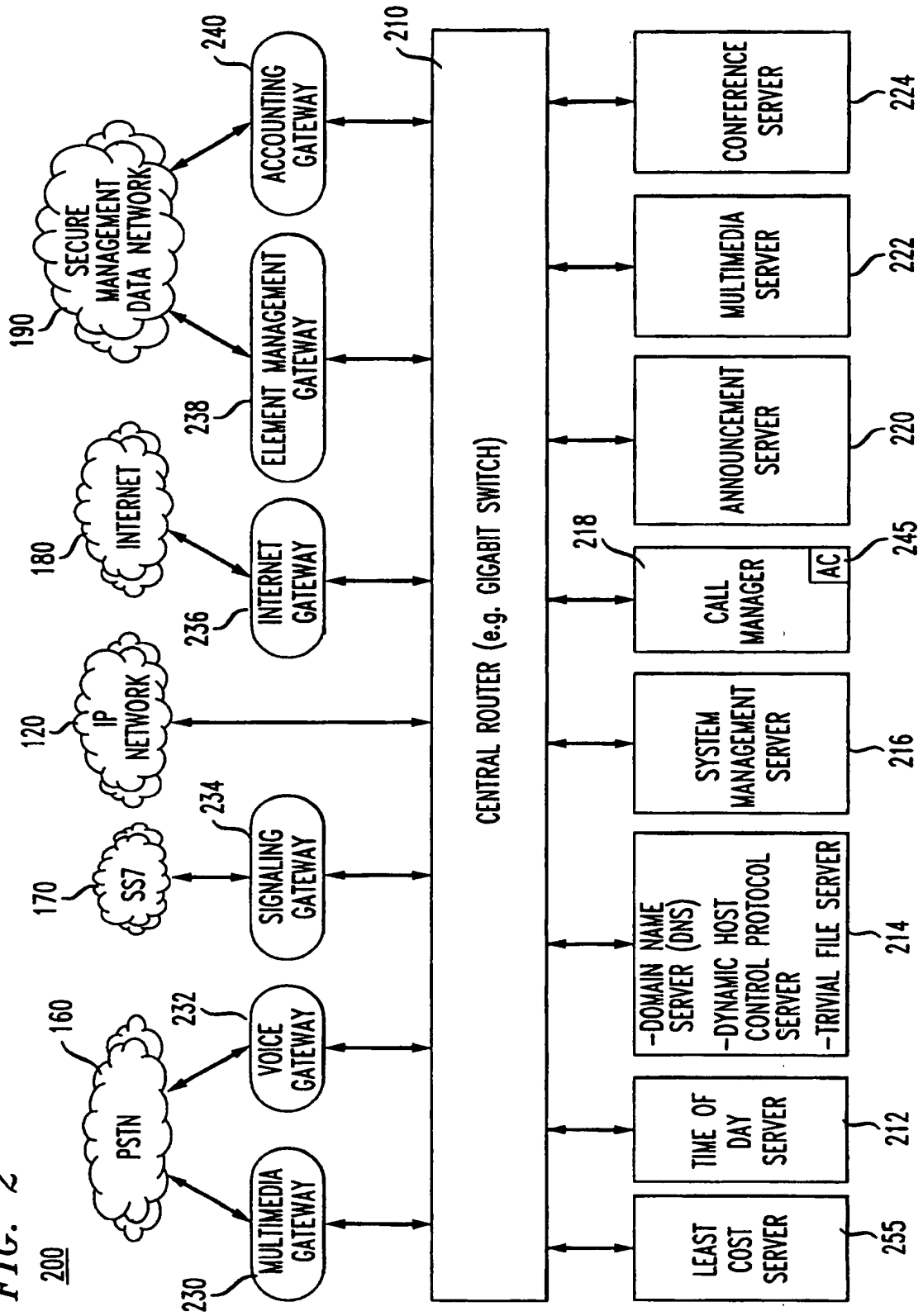


FIG. 3 300

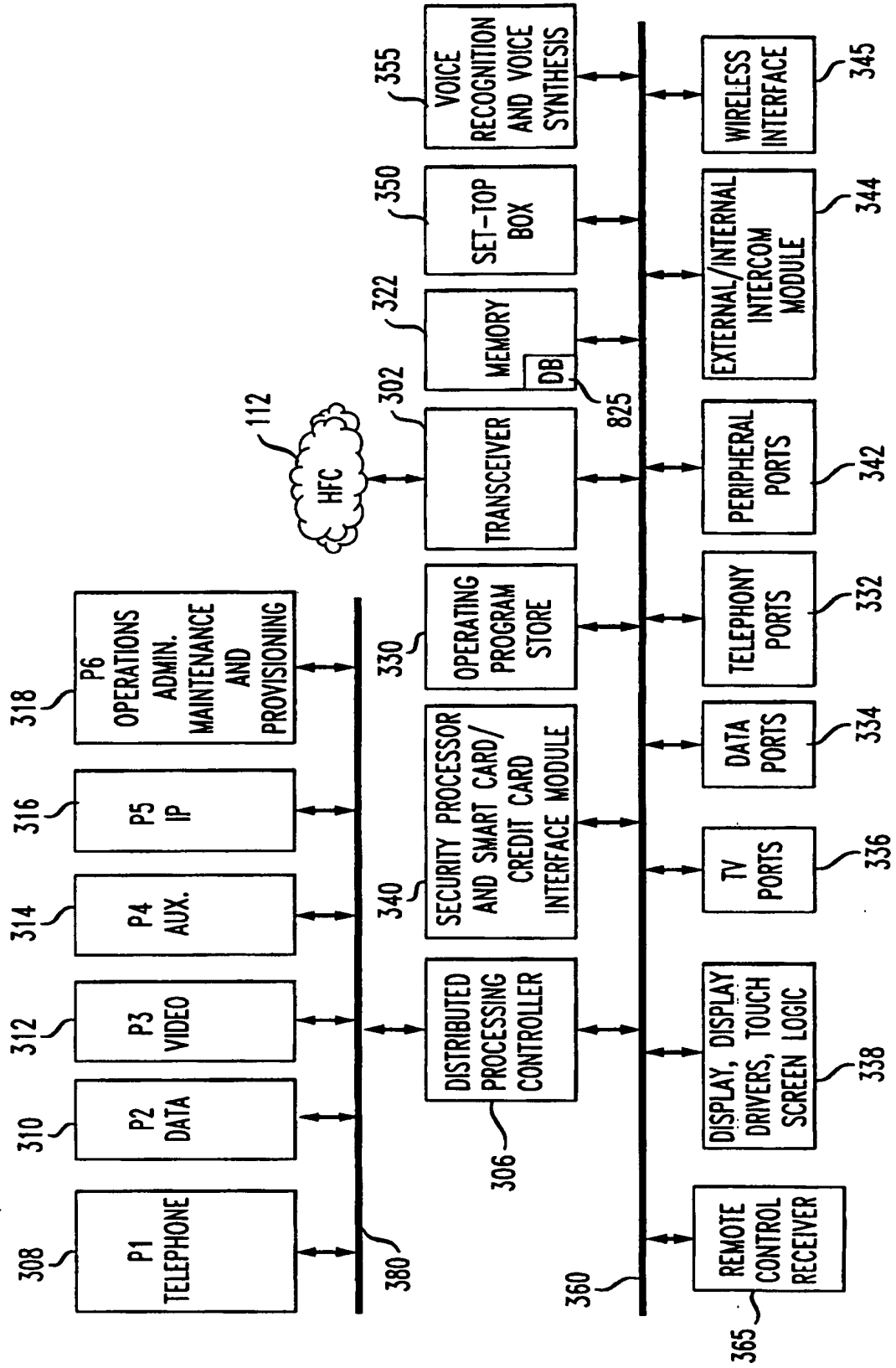


FIG. 4

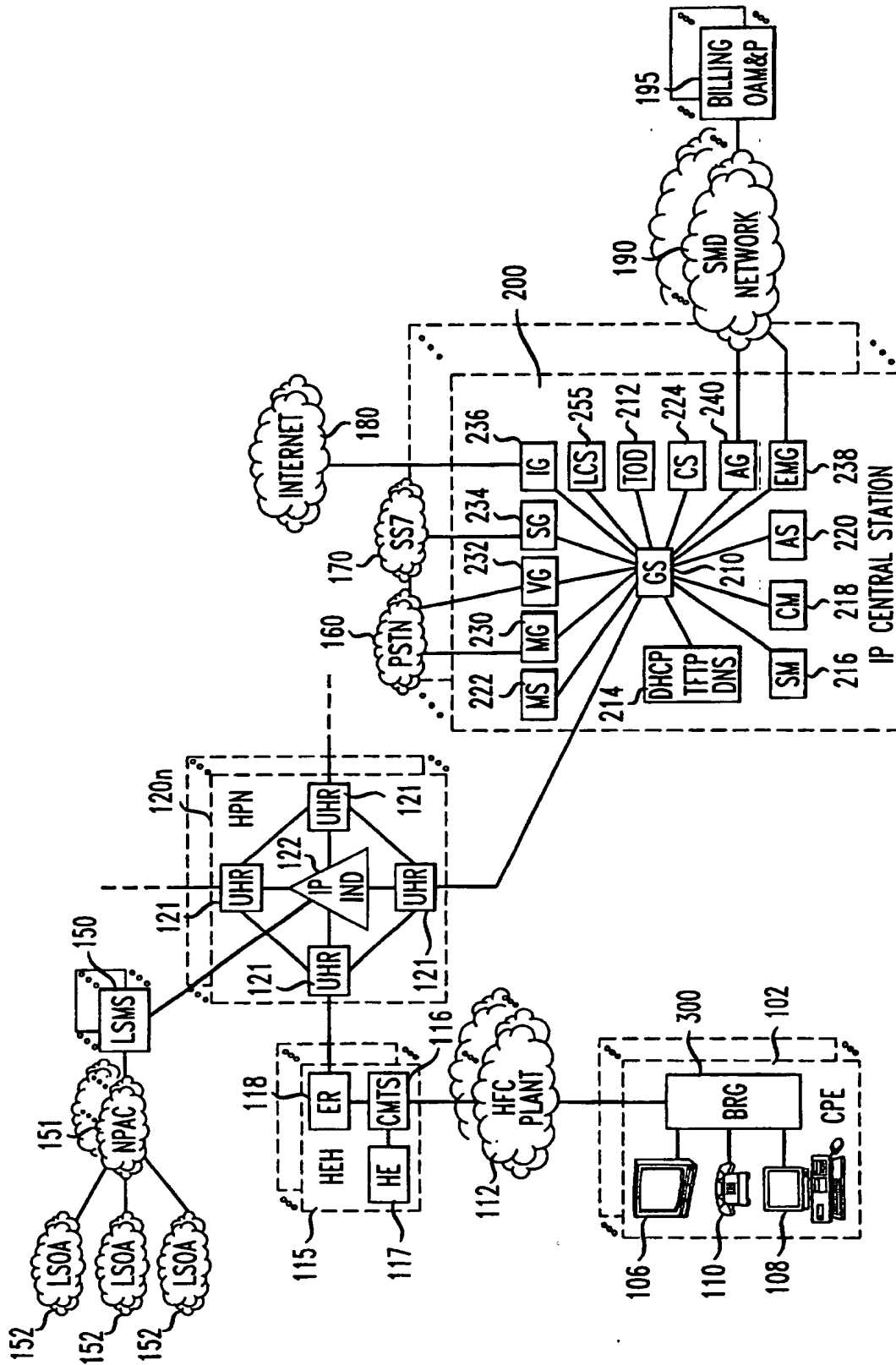


FIG. 5

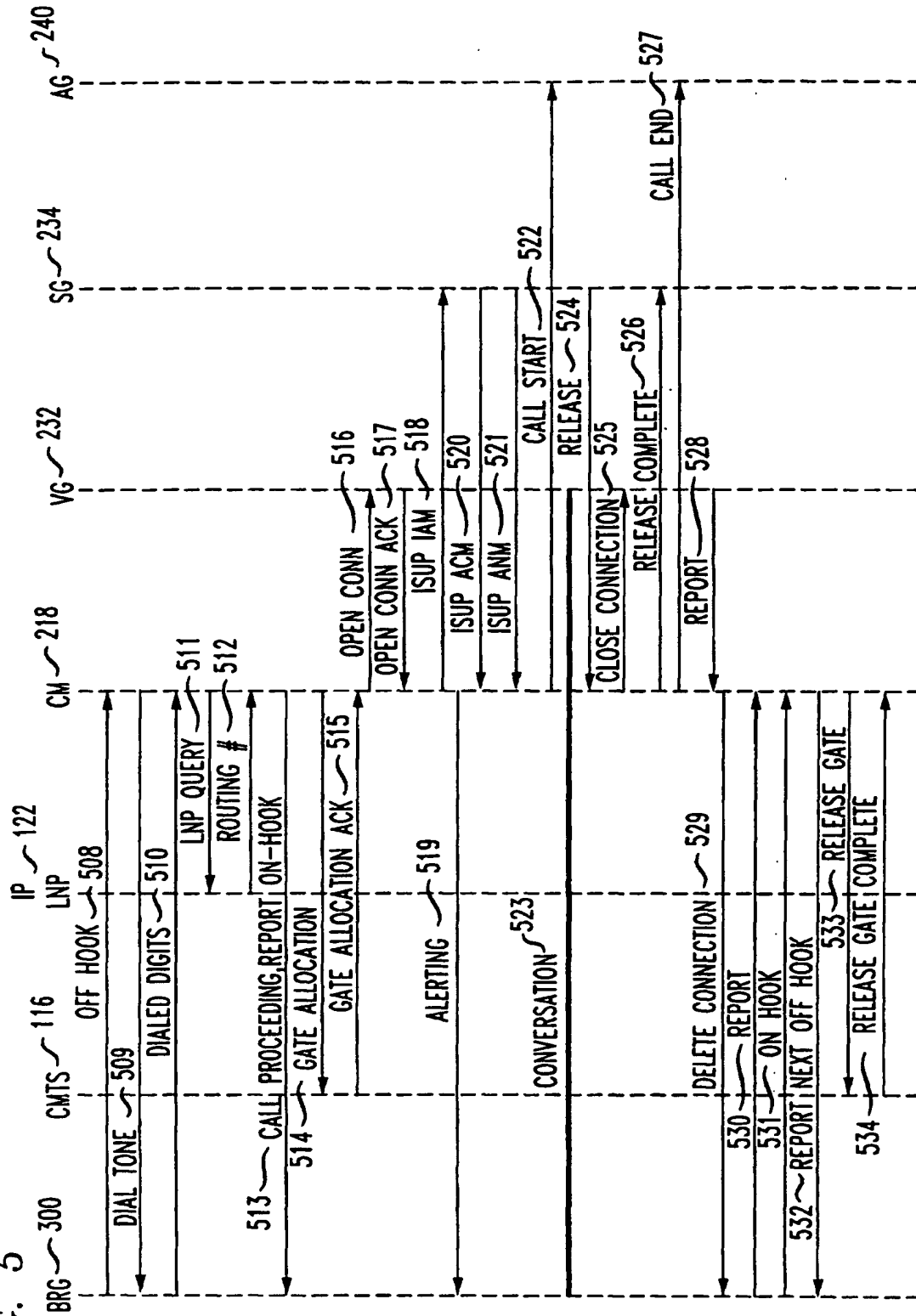


FIG. 6

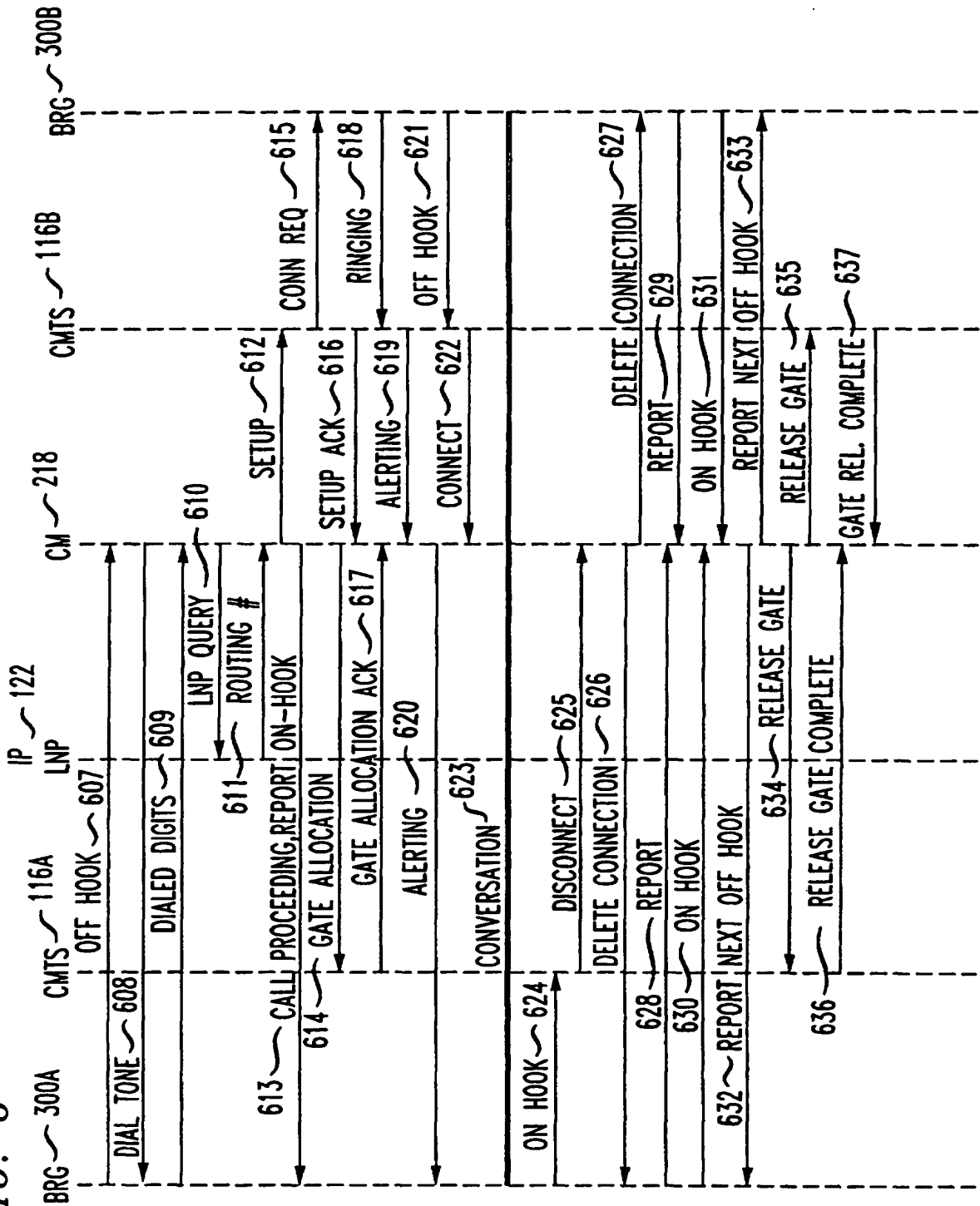


FIG. 7A

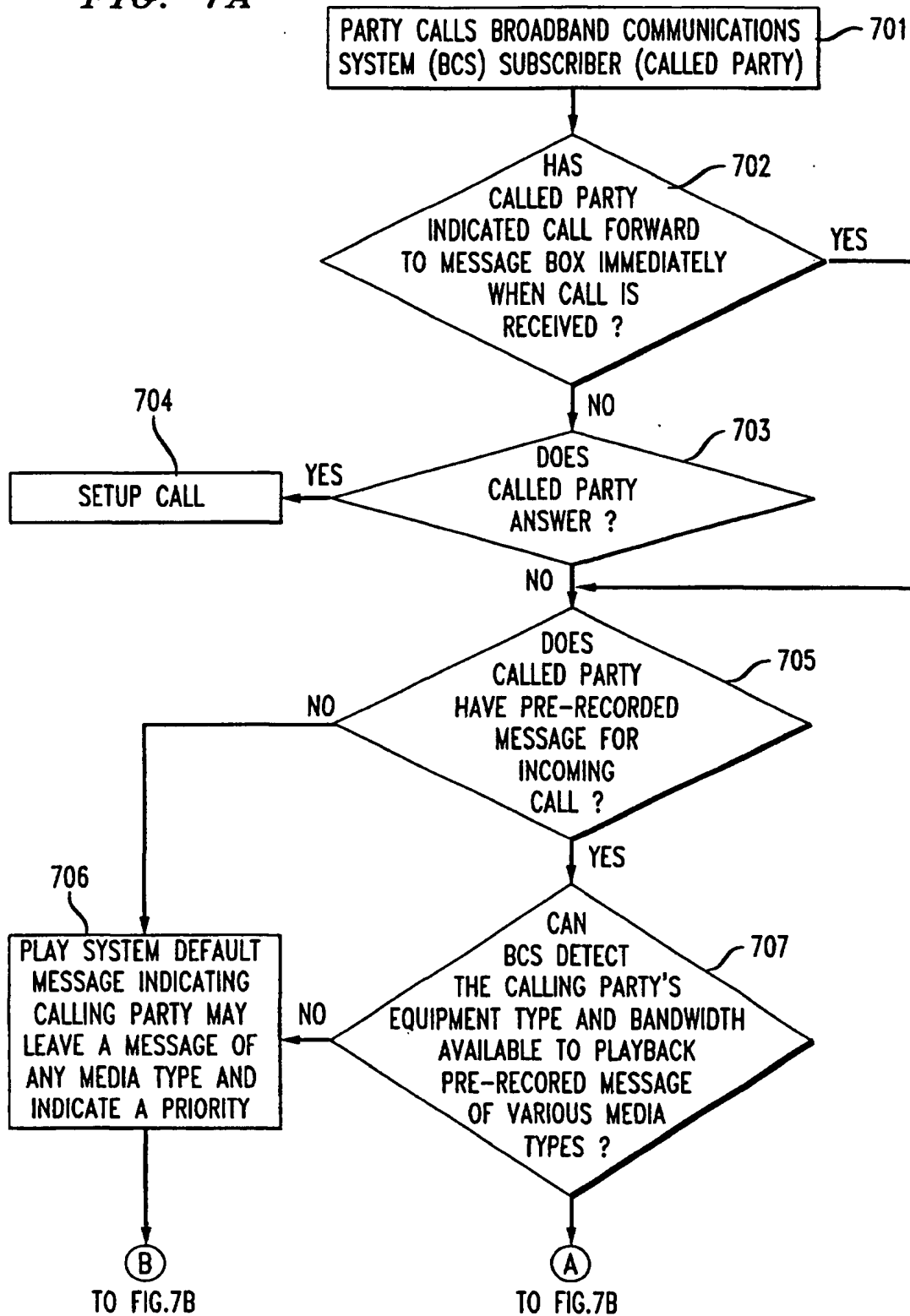


FIG. 7B

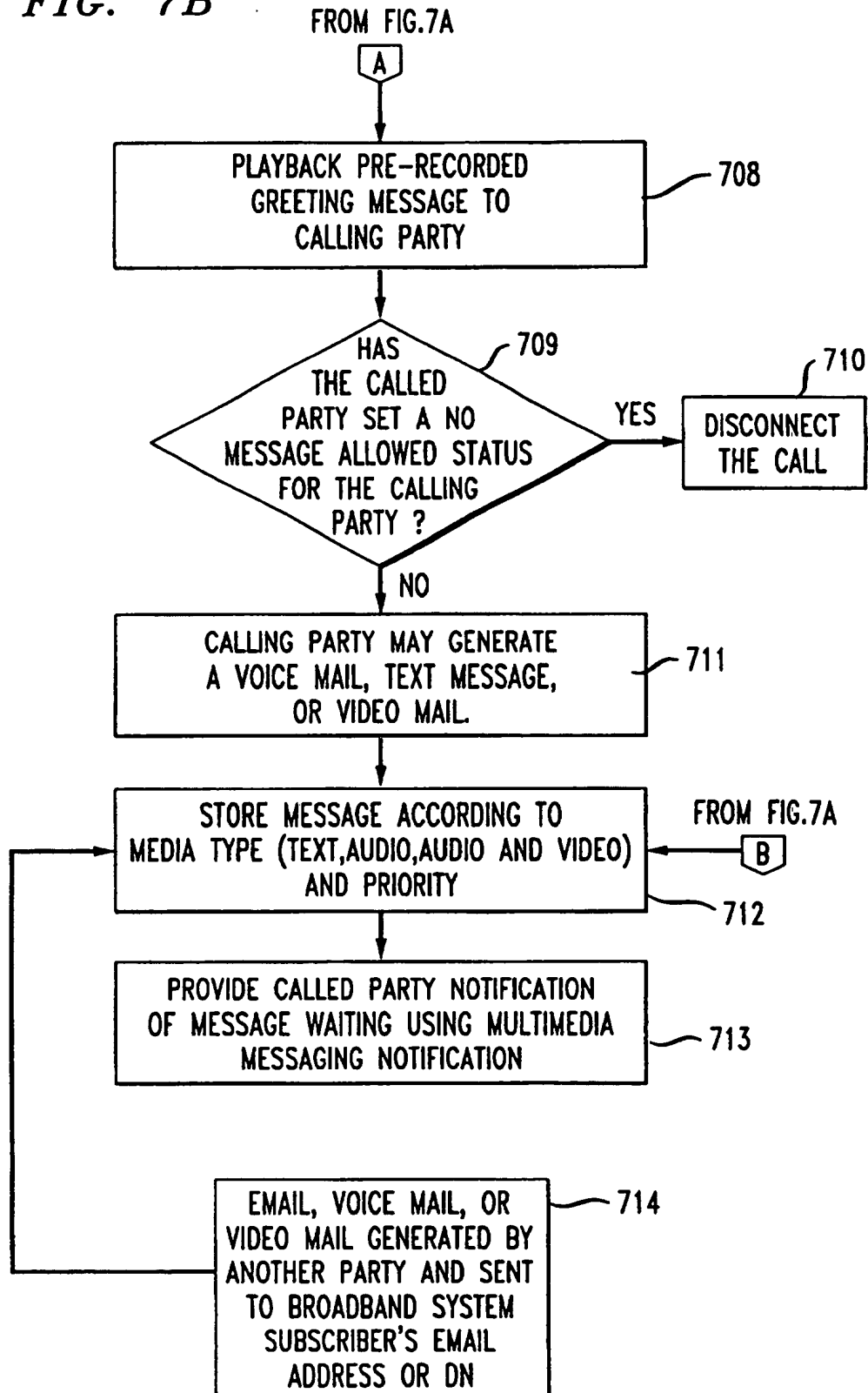


FIG. 8A

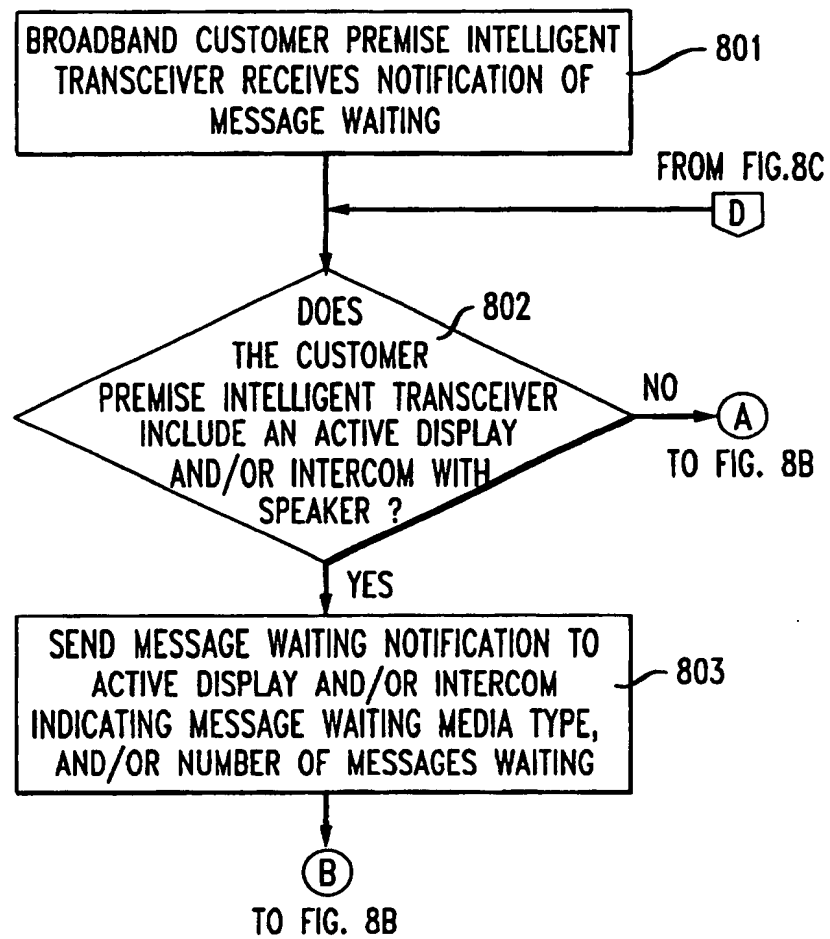


FIG. 8B

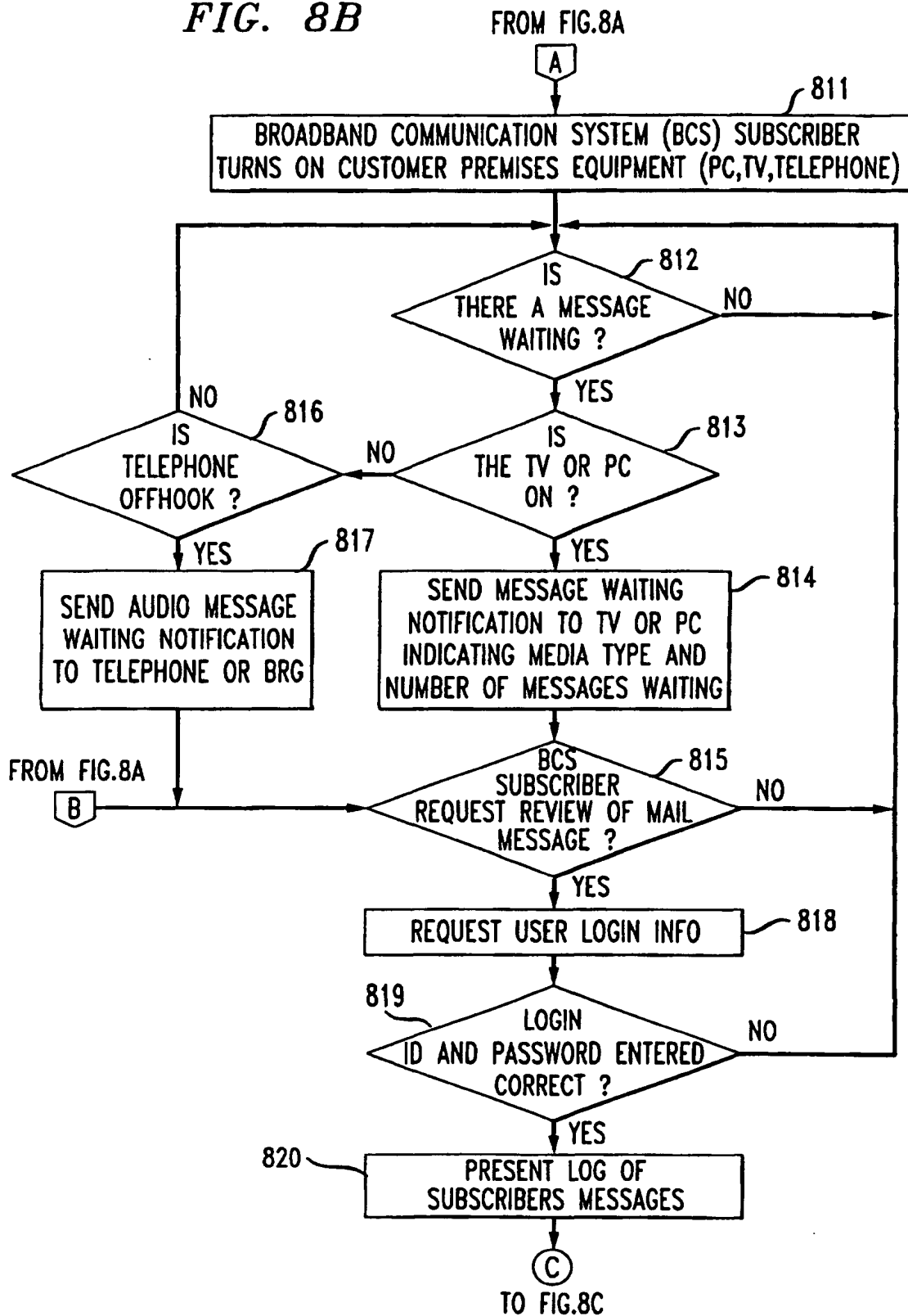


FIG. 8C

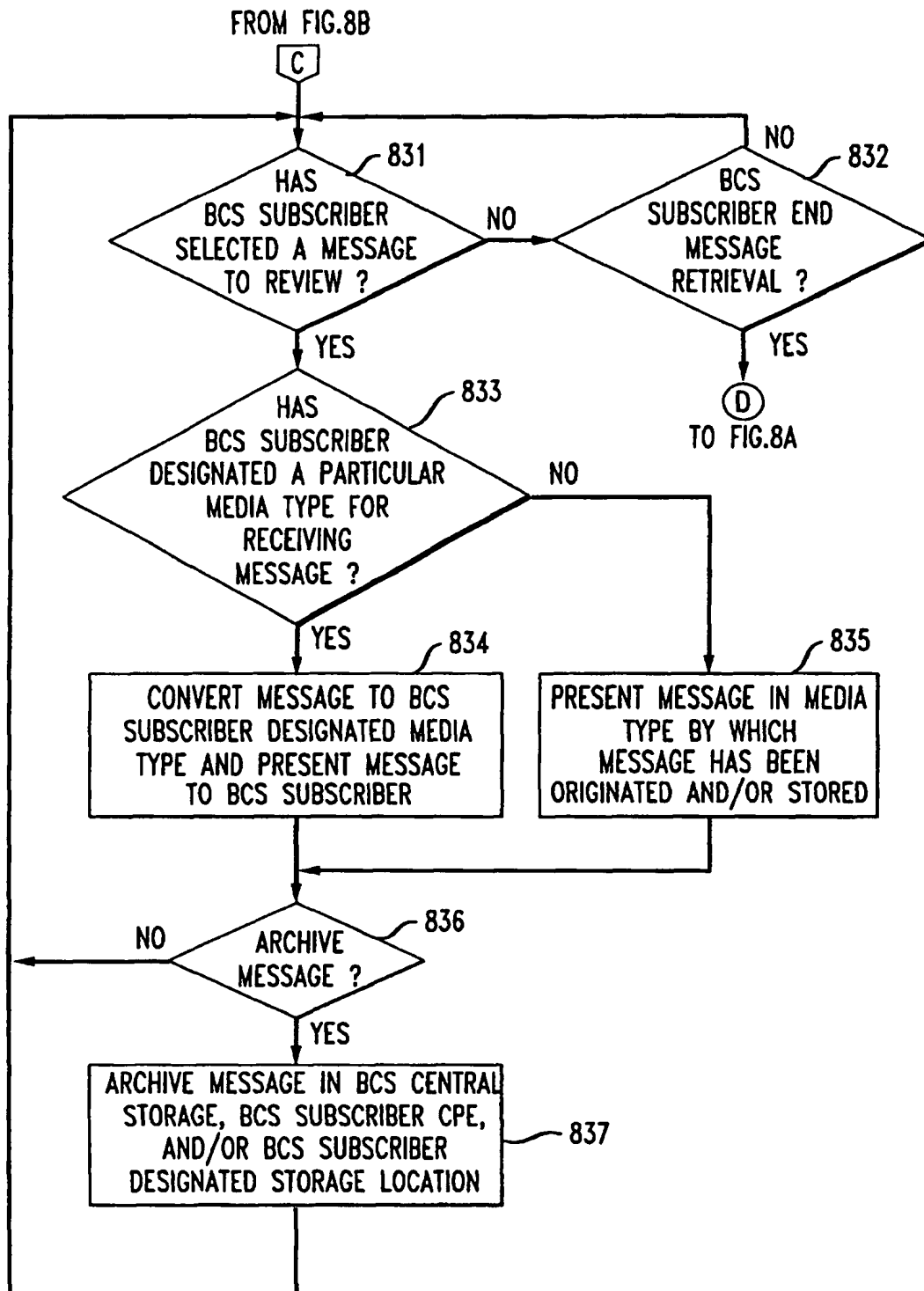


FIG. 9

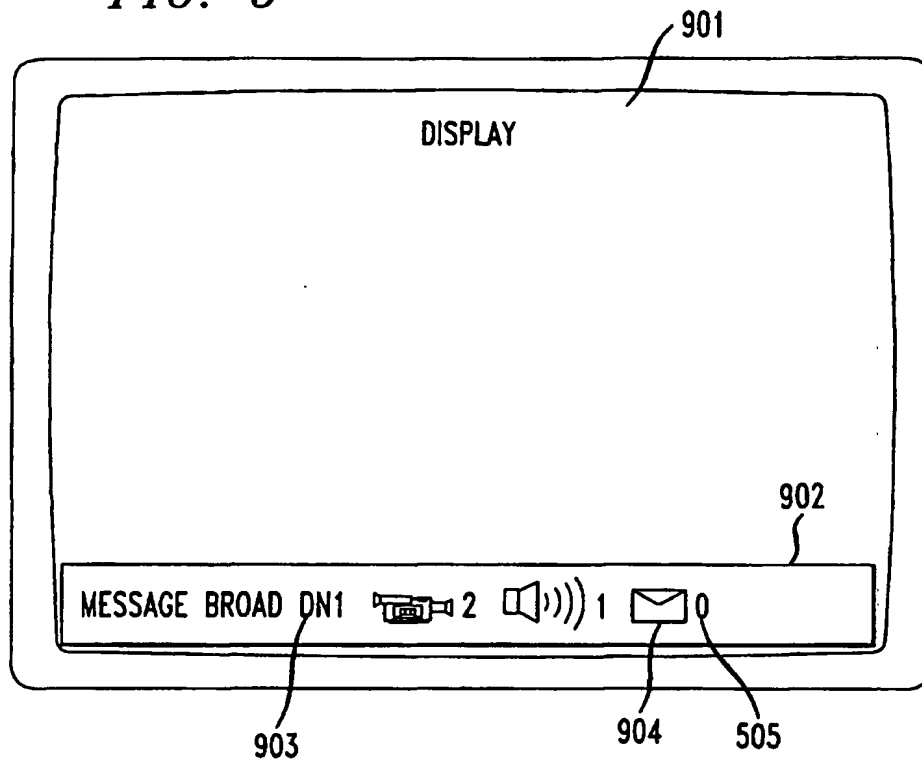


FIG. 10

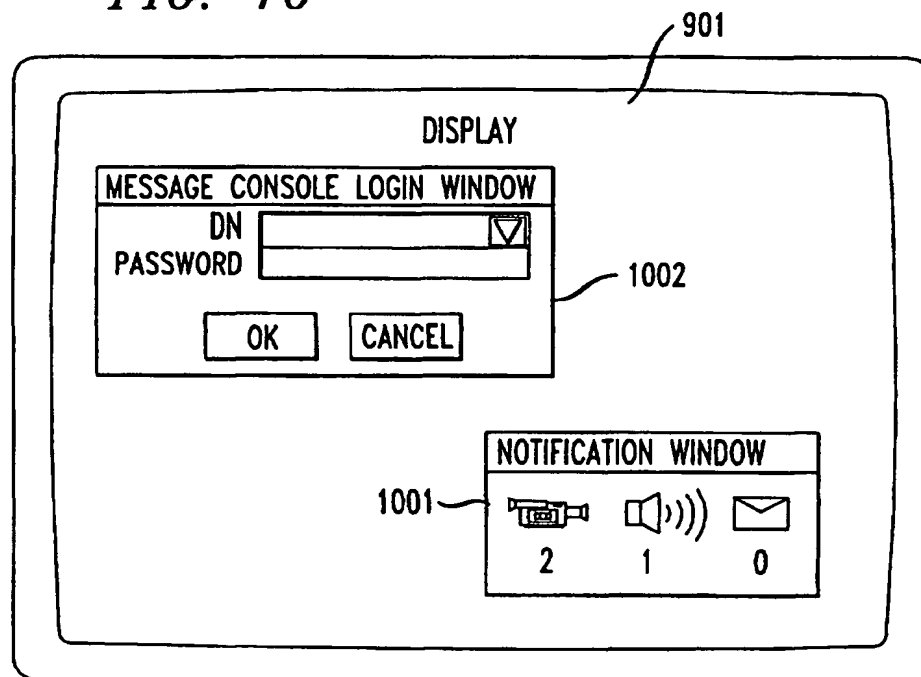


FIG. 11

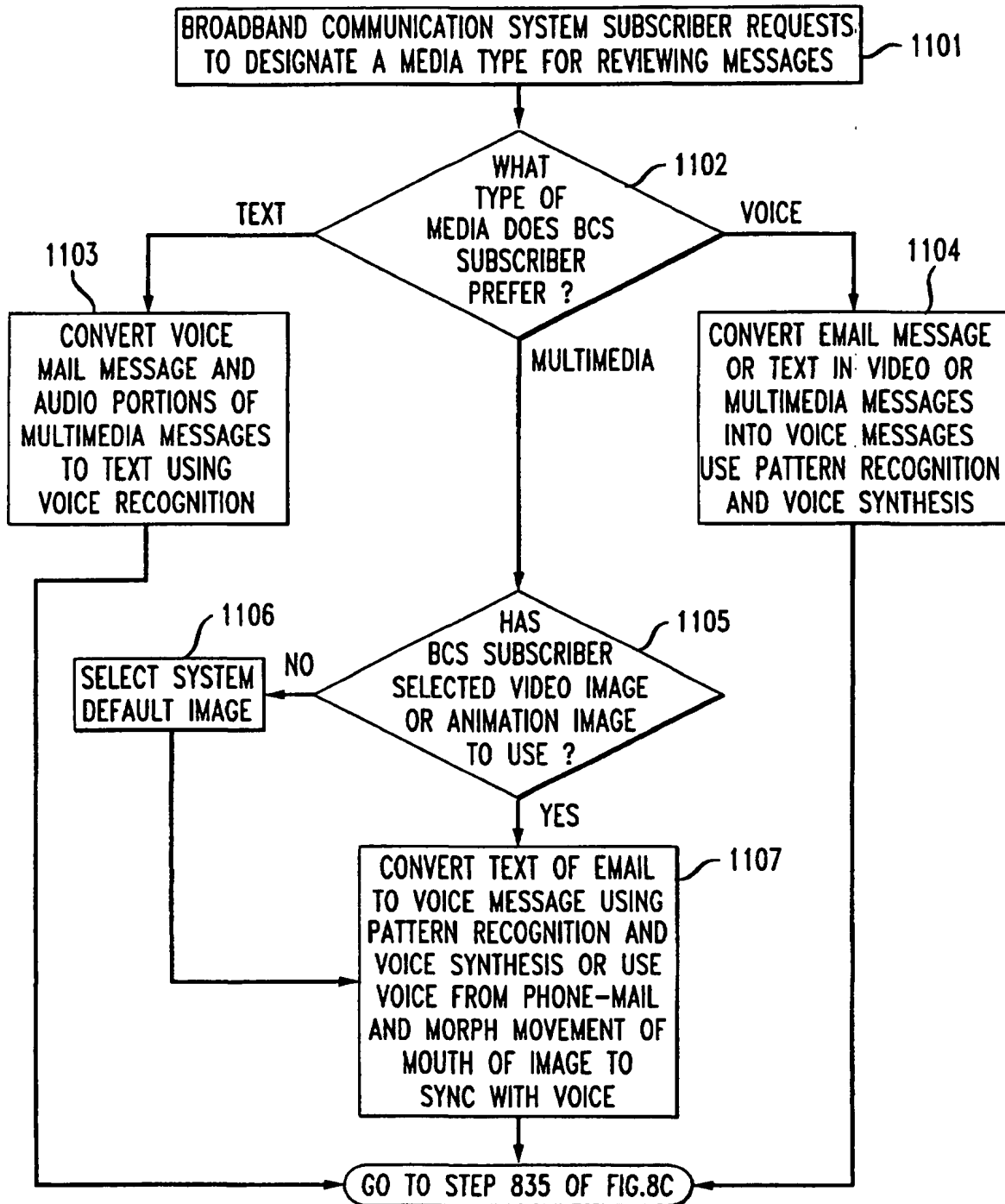


FIG. 12

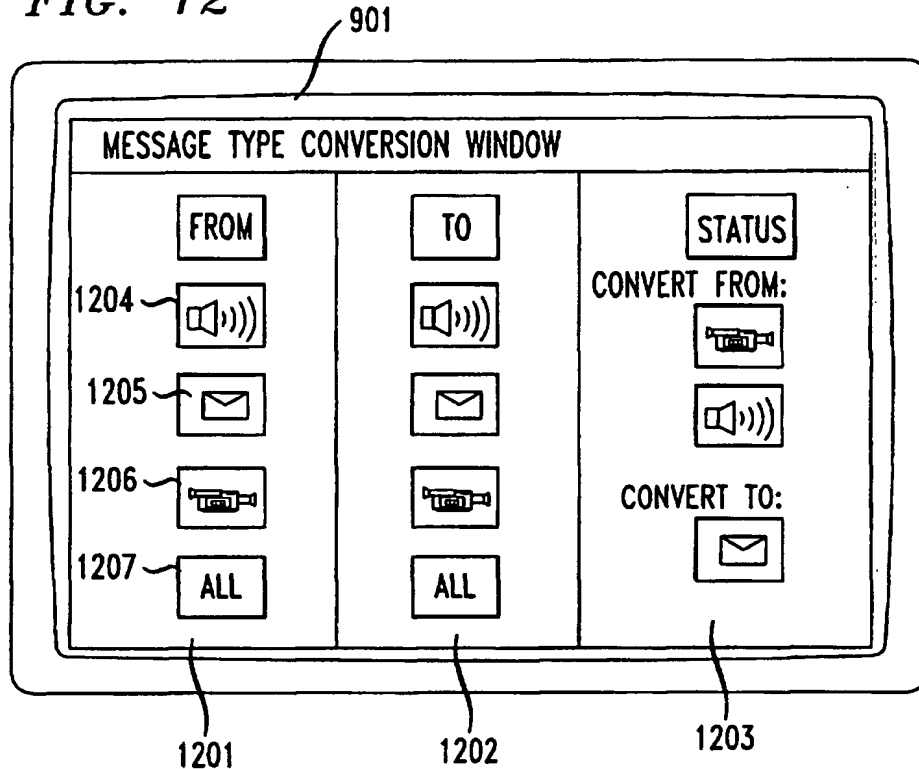


FIG. 13

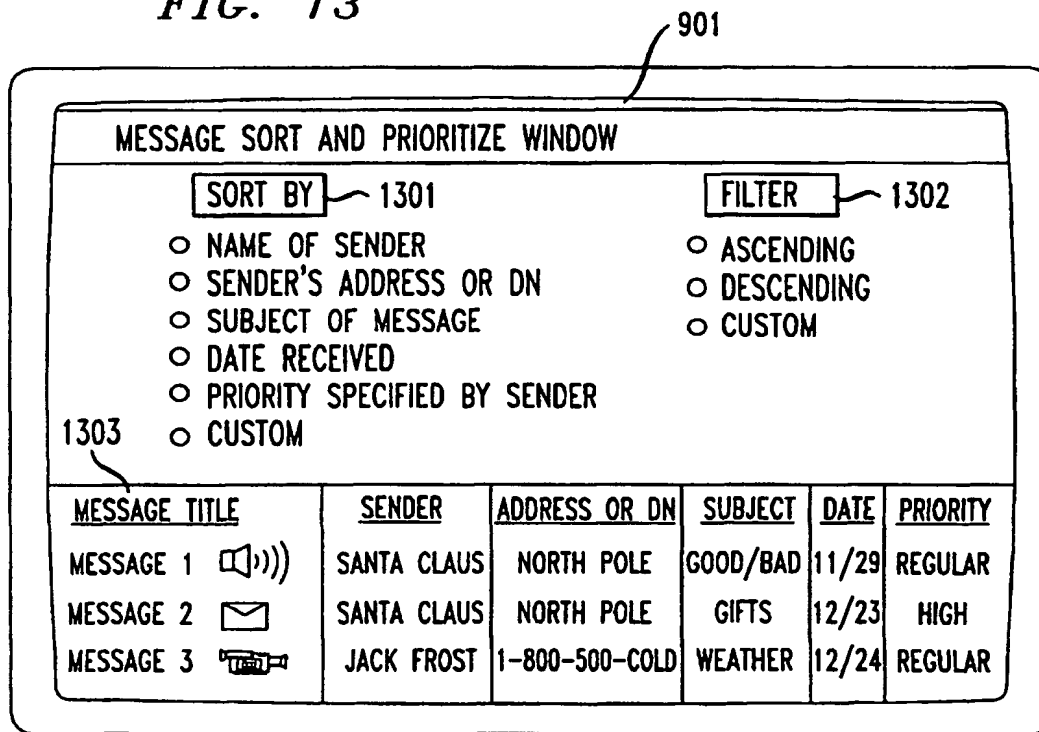


FIG. 14

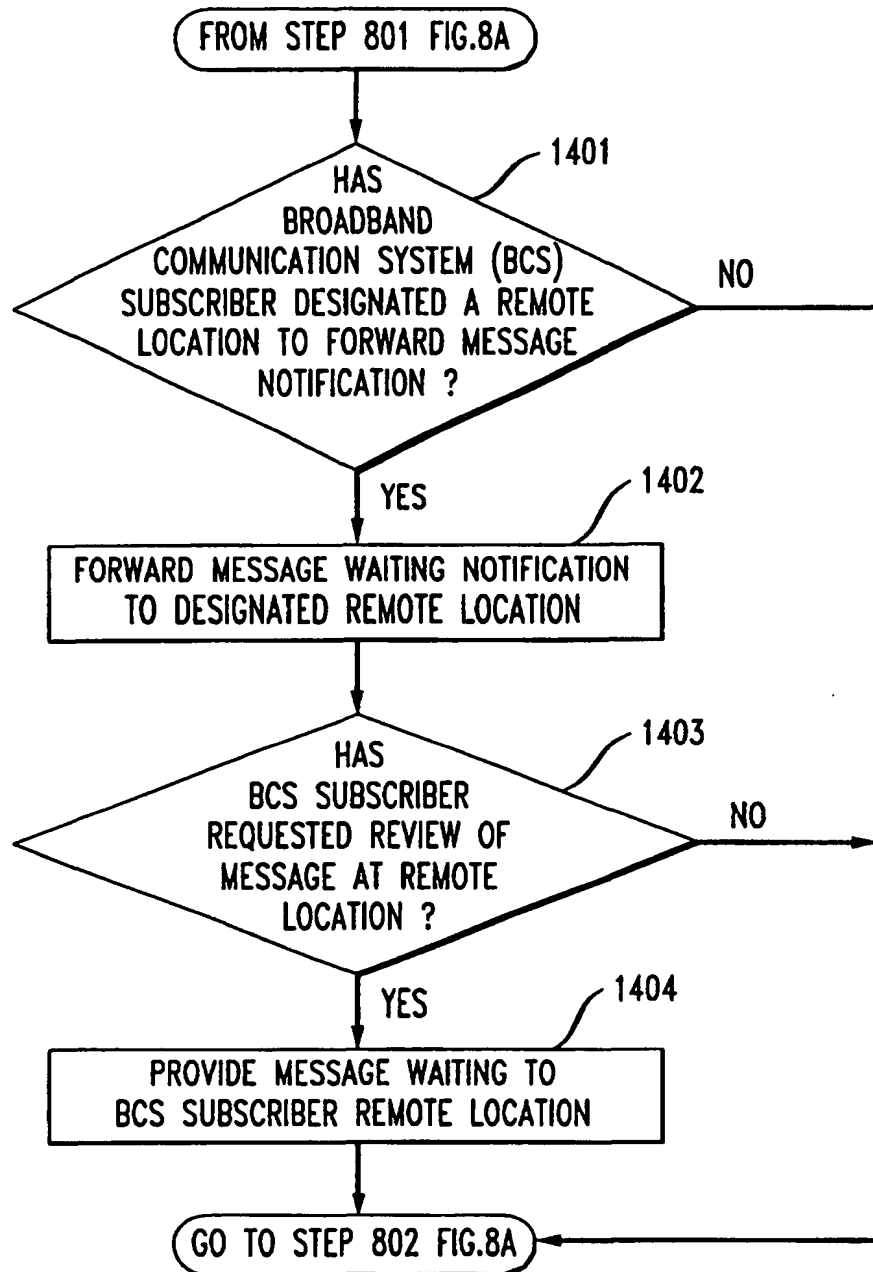


FIG. 15

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MESSAGE NOTIFICATION DESIGNATION SCREEN: DN1

DEVICE 1501	LOCATION 1502	STATUS
CUSTOMER PREMISE EQUIPMENT:	HOME-CENTRAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ON 1503
BRG	HOME-MASTER BEDROOM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ON
TELEPHONE PORT 1	HOME-LIVING ROOM	<input type="checkbox"/> OFF
TELEPHONE PORT 2		
⋮		
PC1	HOME-STUDY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ON
⋮		
TV	HOME-MASTER BEDROOM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ON
⋮		
REMOTE LOCATION: ENTER DN, IP ADDRESS, AND/OR EMAIL ADDRESS	REMOTE LOCATION: BUSINESS - OFFICE PC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ON
EMPLOYEE. AT&T.COM 1504		
<input type="button" value="OK"/> <input type="button" value="CANCEL"/>		

FIG. 16

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MESSAGE STORAGE SELECTION WINDOW

STANDARD STORAGE		1601
MESSAGE STORAGE DEVICE AND LOCATION 1602	STORAGE DURATION 1603	
<u>MAIN</u>		
STATUS: PC: HOME-STUDY (PC PORT 1)	10 DAYS	
<u>BACKUP</u>		
STATUS: IP CENTRAL STATION STORAGE	30 DAYS	
ARCHIVE STORAGE		
MESSAGE STORAGE DEVICE AND LOCATION 1611	STORAGE DURATION 1612	STORAGE TRIGGER 1613
STATUS: IP CENTRAL STATION STORAGE	CONTINUOUS	MANUAL
SPACE USED: <input type="text" value="1GB"/>	AVAILABLE SPACE: <input type="text" value="5GB"/>	COST: <input type="text" value="\$1.25/MIN"/>
		MESSAGE ID

1610